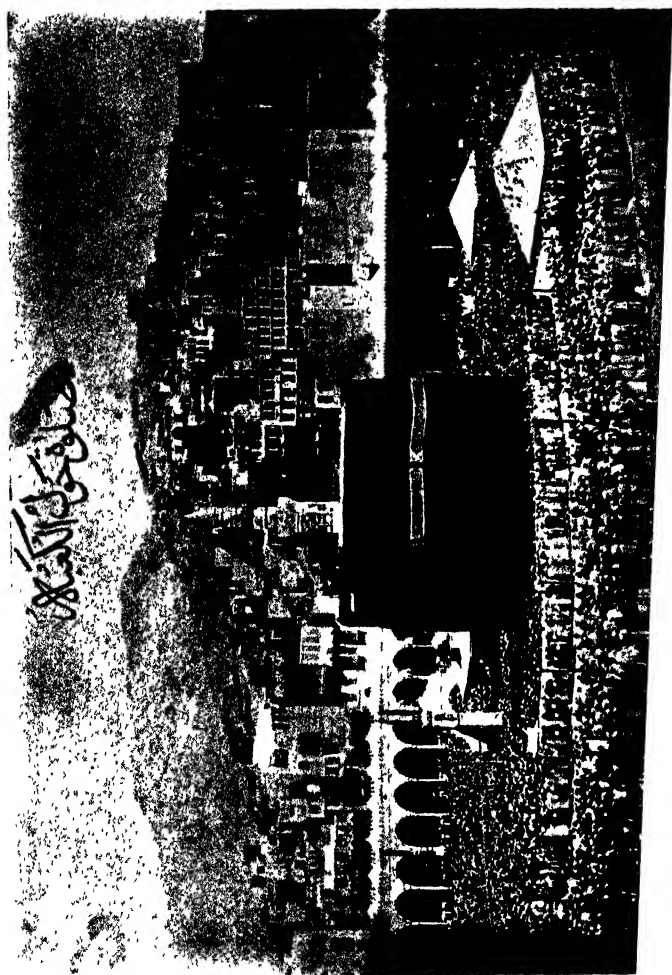


SHIFTING SANDS



مكتبة جامعة القاهرة

MAJOR N. N. E. BRAY

SHIFTING SANDS

Foreword by

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

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FOREWORD

MAJOR BRAY tells in this volume how I came to make his acquaintance during the war. On what mission I then thought of employing him and the six trusty men of his regiment, I cannot now recall, but I still remember the charm of his conversation on that evening and the interest of the strange scenes and men which it called up before my eyes.

Print is colder than the spoken word, but I have found the same charm in reading these pages. A better proof, perhaps, of their fascination is that, having undertaken to write this foreword and having received the proofs to enable me to fulfil my promise, I could not find them anywhere on the morning I had set apart for the purpose. My son had found them, opened them at hazard and became so absorbed in them that they did not reappear in my room till he had finished them. If the two generations were not always interested in the same points, each found its attention held and its interest stimulated by the scenes of the Arab movement which Major Bray paints in these pages.

Major Bray has a view of his own and does not hesitate to express it. The last book which I read on the Arab campaigns extolled the strategy of Colonel Lawrence and suggested that even the war in the West might have been shortened if some of the lessons which Lawrence had evolved for himself had penetrated Headquarters and Whitehall. A different

view is taken by Major Bray. It is not for me to decide where military doctors disagree, and I offer no judgment on their differing appreciations of what was best in the Shifting Sands of Arab policy. Each served his country in his own way; both were devoted to the Arab cause. If they differed in many matters, they might perhaps reach final agreement in criticizing the mistakes of the government at home.

Such is the fate of Governments and pioneers.

AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.

Sept. 3rd, 1934.

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PREFACE

SIXTEEN years have passed since the events of which this book speaks took place. During this period I have been frequently pressed to write this book by many of those who took an active part in the Arab Movement.

Like myself, they felt keenly the distorted view of the Arab revolt which had been presented to the world. They resented the false glamour which had surrounded a movement which called for supreme sacrifice ; and condemned the Arabian Nights aspect which did an injustice alike to the Arab and to the British peoples.

I delayed acceding to their importunities, feeling that the time was not ripe to give the public another story—less romantic, less sensational, but more in accord with the true and sober facts. Perhaps even now I am too premature.

The Arabs have been the traditional friends of the British for centuries. In many respects the interests of the two peoples are common. Their future happiness is interwoven. Their fierce defence of liberty, and their belief in a supreme Being against the reactionary and atheistic forces of the world being mutually and tenaciously held.

Both nations are destined to co-operate ; and, if these few pages contribute something towards a deeper understanding which will make that co-operation more sure, their publication will be justified and their author amply rewarded.

My acknowledgments and grateful thanks are due to His Excellency Sheikh Hafiz Wahba and to Mr. Mahmood Zada for their very valuable help in editing this book from the Arab point of view, and for the details of King Ibn Sa'ud's career in the first portion of Part II, Chapter XVI. Also to my sons, Arthur and Victor, whose kindly help, encouragement and interest have contributed in no small degree to the completion of my task.

September 28th, 1934.

PROLOGUE

As we rounded the last bend of the Bara Lacha Pass, the day was but two hours old, and the sun had still to climb the Eastern ranges before its rays could flood the Lingti plain, which hung suspended 15,000 feet above the level of the sea. Blue shadows still lurked between the crags and the morning mists lay in the hollows, awaiting the sun's warmth to coax away their dewy drops.

There were six of us, moving slowly in single file, our bodies bent to the fury of the wind which whistled down the plain.

I led the way, as befitted the lord of the expedition, a rifle lay in the crook of my left arm—for Shikar was our objective—my right hand grasped a five-foot bamboo staff, iron shod to bite the ice, when the occasion rose, or to save a slip on treacherous slopes.

Immediately behind me came the tall wiry form of Dhildhi, my Thibetan shikari, who was to guide me to the feeding grounds of the *Ovis Ammon*, that glorious Himalayan sheep, the lure to my ambition. A short distance in the rear followed our four carriers, short powerful men, whose flat faces and prominent cheekbones proclaimed their origin, for they dwelt in Spiti, whose bleak highlands hug the western borders of Thibet. Beneath the towering peaks which hemmed us in we seemed but tiny specks as we wound our way between the boulders which sprinkled the plain, the only human beings

in all that wilderness of rock and ice, for the country was uninhabited and forbidding. Not a tree or shrub was there to soften its severity, save only a species of rhododendron, whose dwarfed body and contorted limbs testified to the harshness of the treatment it received in its desperate struggle for existence.

Fifteen miles ahead lay our objective, for here the walls of the cliffs were cleft by a gorge, down which foamed a torrent sprung from a vast glacier, whose glistening surface we could see, even at that distance, stretched between two massive pillars of snow; on seeing which, Dhildhi hastened to my side. "See, Sahib," said he, stretching out his arms and pointing to the glacier, "yonder, where the sun shines back at us, are the slopes where the Ammon graze."

I was glad of the excuse his information gave me to suggest that he and I should hasten on ahead and choose our camping site. He readily assented and we quickly out-distanced our followers.

Four hours' hard walking brought us to the gorge, the gateway to the valley of my dreams, and I looked forward to the morrow, when he and I would pass that narrow entrance and explore the slopes beyond.

We chose for our camping ground a bare patch upon the plain, for the unfriendly heights offered us no level space on which to pitch my small tent.

Dhildhi began to occupy himself in collecting large stones and piling them loosely, one upon the other, to form rough walls, which would protect us, in a measure, from the wind which whistled across the plains with unabated fury. I began to assist him, but this he would not suffer. "It is not meet,"

said he, " for a Sahib to work, while he has others to serve him," and so I had, perforce, to sit idly by and watch him labour alone.

Before long, however, our carriers arrived, and after a short rest, they gave him their aid, so that my tent was soon pitched within four waist-high walls, to one side of which they added others for their own protection.

Behind this rude shelter, we crouched and passed the remainder of the day, each according to his pleasure.

The afternoon passed in pleasant loitering and dozing indolence, until the twilight came to warn us to make our final preparations for the night.

Two small fires, made from the shrivelled roots of the rhododendron, glowed cheerfully and heated for our comfort our pannikins of rice, which, sweetened with a little sugar, would be our only "course," for the difficulties of our journey would not allow us greater luxuries. Our meal, then, did not take us long and by the time the last mouthful was washed down by a cup of ice-cold water, the short twilight was gone, and then, some mighty hand, with abandoned profusion, suddenly scattered the brilliant stars into the dark vault of heaven.

Sitting there beneath the stars, I meditated on the morrow and tried to imagine what lay beyond the gateway of the gorge, and I little dreamed that when I repassed the black slit, my mind would be burdened with a problem which would occupy it for many years to come.

Suddenly, the thread of my thoughts was snapped by an unusual clamour from my following. Usually their voices were low ; if unmusical, at least not unpleasant, and the " tings " and " tongs " of their

Thibetan dialect pleased the ear. But now their tones were discordant and harsh and all seemed to be speaking at once. Several times I heard the word "Japōn" repeated and I marvelled that Japan should be mentioned by these simple folk, and still more, that it should occasion such heat among them.

Finally, becoming impatient at a debate whose purport I could in no wise understand, and wishing to go to sleep, I roughly ordered Dhildhi to silence their clamour. At the first sound of my voice, however, the racket stopped abruptly and in the calm which followed, I quickly fell asleep.

It seemed to me that I had slumbered but a moment, when I was roused by Dhildhi's voice, saying in his queer Hindustani: "Sahib—Sahib, awake! The dawn is near at hand. We must soon start, for we have far to go and the way is hard."

I rubbed my eyes and sat up; it seemed to me to be quite dark and the air was bitter cold. I reluctantly left my warm blankets and stood, shivering and rebellious, for I saw no signs of the dawn he spoke of. I hastened into my clothes, however, and stepping out into the open air, looked around me. Dhildhi's watch was the heavens, and as I glanced to the east, I saw that he was right; the glory of the stars was passing and they shone pale, as if tired with their night's vigil.

Hastily swallowing a cup of tea, which Dhildhi's forethought had prepared, I took up my rifle and staff and followed him out of the camp, making for the black entrance of the gorge.

As we entered it, the sudden thunder of the waters smote our ears and paralysed our senses. The world seemed to contain naught else save this

sullen roar—a bellow of defiance it seemed, against our intrusion—but the narrow path which Dhildhi followed with uncanny ease in the gloom, rose rapidly up the face of the cliff, and as we mounted ever higher and higher, the angry roar sank to a muffled murmur and finally to a whisper, carried fitfully on the wind.

At length, after an hour's heart-breaking effort, we reached the brow of the cliff and the going along the glaxis of the mountain was easier, for the path now rose at a gentle angle ; and there, in the coming dawn, I saw ahead of me a massive overhanging rock, which seemed as if it might, at any moment, lose its grip on the mountain side and plunge head-long into the depths below. But Dhildhi made straight for it, and clambering up its jagged surface, motioned me to follow.

Its top was broad and flat and its commanding position gave us an uninterrupted view of the vast amphitheatre which was spread before us. We lay down, side by side, on its hard surface to bide the coming of the day. Nor had we long to wait, for soon the finger of the dawn gently woke the sleeping mountains, changing their nightly pallor to a crimson glow which I hoped might endure for ever, but the sun's rising splendour stole the red away, so that the peaks stood bare in their naked whiteness, and the day had come.

And now Dhildhi with his unaided eyes, keen as those of an eagle, and myself, my vision assisted by powerful binoculars, searched each boulder and tried to pierce the shadows of the far slopes before us for signs of our quarry.

After two hours of anxious watching, our patience was unrewarded, and being fatigued by the strain,

I rested my eyes awhile and then remembered the excitement of the previous evening. I therefore asked Dhildhi to tell me of the subject of their discussion, and how it was that anything connected with Japan could possibly interest either himself or his companions.

For a while he made no reply, but began to crumble a bit of shale to bits between his fingers. Finally, as I was about to repeat the question, he said : “ Sahib, men say that when Japan, a small eastern nation, drove the mighty Russian armies from Manchuria and took these lands for herself, she did more than gain a selfish victory—Japan fought for Asia and the victory was Asia’s freedom—what Japan has done may be repeated. Men also say that the European nations are no longer as they were and that the bravery of the Asiatic is superior to the outworn valour of the white man. To-day it is the turn of the West—to-morrow it may well be that of the East.”

“ And what men say these things ? ” I asked—but to this question he gave me no answer.

These surprising words, spoken with a quiet intensity, made upon me a profound impression. Had they been uttered in India by a native politician, had they even been said within the comfortable surroundings of civilization, they might, perhaps, have had but little influence upon my mind. But imagine the circumstances, the locality and the individual giving them utterance !

In the heart of the Himalayas, in the midst of these bleak glacial highlands ! Dhildhi, it is true, had occasionally associated with a Sahib and was a comparative traveller, since he had sometimes crossed the Baralacha and so touched the fringe of

civilization. But the others? Ignorant, verminous coolies, who had never been farther south than their native Spiti.

How then, had this conception of the vincibility of the European, this hope of a new era, found its way to these deserted, frozen regions?

Could any thinking man dismiss as trivial an incident of this nature?

I remember so clearly the circumstances—the intense solitude—the profound silence—the vastness of those towering heights, and yet, in spite of this isolation, I seemed to hear a whisper, to sense a feeling of that new-born conception of which he had spoken and which had drifted, intangible as vapour, from the battlefields of Manchuria, over the thousands of miles of desert, plain and mountain, to reach finally this remote corner; and as it swept over the Orient, it left behind it a restlessness, a longing and an urge, which would one day change the face of the Eastern world. That this was no idle imagining on my part, future events were to show.

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE RESTLESS SPIRIT

ONE morning, in the late summer of the year 1911, an unusual bustle was to be noticed at the headquarters building of the Government of India in Simla. Red-coated "Chuprassis" bustled to and fro bearing despatch boxes and large official envelopes into the various offices and, in particular, into a large high-ceilinged room, in the centre of which stood a heavy table covered with a green baize cloth. On this table were placed, in orderly array, white foolscap paper, pens and inkstands and all the paraphernalia necessary for a conference or business meeting.

Scattered about the room were several groups of men engaged in free-and-easy conversation. Every now and then a hearty laugh would break out, or a jesting word would be flung from one group to another.

A casual glance and they appeared to be a typical party of English gentlemen, met together for a light-hearted discussion of some congenial subject.

Some little time had elapsed since the last-comer had entered the room, but from the way their glances kept straying towards the door, it was obvious that the company expected one more to complete the party.

Somewhere in the passage outside, a clock struck

the hour of ten, and as the last stroke ended, a small man with a grey moustache and upright military bearing bustled into the room. After a keen glance around and with a cheery "Good morning, gentlemen, are we all present?" he took the seat at the head of the table and motioned to the others to take their places.

This was Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson, lately come from England to preside over a committee which was to decide financial and military questions of the utmost gravity for India—yes, of the utmost gravity—for its task was to reduce expenditure; more particularly, military expenditure, and the margin was not great; 70,000 white troops, 140,000 Indian, spread about among a population of three hundred and twenty millions, kept the peace and watched a frontier three thousand miles in length. An injudicious decision on the committee's part might well impair the efficiency of this small force and jeopardise the safety of an Empire.

The army was just sufficient to hold the gates of India against an open enemy attacking from across the border, but it was threatened by a hidden foe working in the dark and breeding treachery.

In this year of 1911, sedition was rife and agitators crept about the country, poisoning men's minds and urging the millions of India to rise and fling the British back to their native seas.

The question was: What was the actual extent of the danger? It was this very problem which was about to be considered when Lord Nicholson took his seat.

To help them to judge the issue, there came before the committee a *man*—over six feet in height, massive and broad-shouldered. His heavy bull-dog jaw

and lips tight closed, showed an iron determination ; a magnificent forehead, broad and high, gave evidence of the keen brain which lay behind, while his dark eyes flashed an unusual intelligence. This man, on whose evidence much would depend, was Sir Charles Cleveland, head of the Indian Secret Service.

He gave his evidence in carefully measured terms and clearly made a deep impression upon his listeners. All eyes were fixed upon him intently as he described, in clear and forceful words, the workings of those hidden forces which day and night were working to undermine the safety of the State.

But it was his final conclusions which were the most impressive :—

“ It is not only that we have to deal with political agitation, which is general and working more or less openly, but with sedition, which is being fostered in baffling secrecy. Unrest, in one form or another, is on the increase. It is not confined to one province, but is general throughout the country—like some hidden fire ; if it is suppressed in one direction it flames out in another. These outbreaks demonstrate a purpose and a method not to be ignored. There is no doubt that they are inter-connected and highly organized and my own impression,” he concluded gravely, “ is that they are directed and controlled by one great intellect ; but whose ? So far, unfortunately, with all the machinery at our disposal, we have been unable to discover.”

This evidence was the outstanding matter of the day's deliberations and, in fact, it influenced to no small extent the final findings of the committee, which have, however, no concern with the events about to be recorded.

I pondered over Sir Charles' final conclusions a long time ; who would not ? He considered that there was an organized conspiracy directed by one agency. But was this possible ? If so, there was only one logical conclusion to account for the fact that the Indian Secret Service had been unable to trace the source. This service was, perhaps, the most efficient in the world and, if it was unable to follow the conspiracy to its beginnings, then there was, in all probability, only one explanation—the directing force was working outside India and beyond the reach of the Indian organization.

And then my mind went back to those words spoken amid the snows :

“ Japan fought for Asia and the victory was Asia's.”

Were these words true ? If they were, was it not equally possible that agitation in India was due “ to one brain ” ? Yes—but that brain not a human one, but an ideal shared by the millions in the East and propelling them towards a common goal !

It must be confessed that as my own ideas were still so nebulous my experience being so limited, I feared to give them concrete form—yet I felt, that as far as I was concerned, I could not let them rest in that uncertain state. If only for my own satisfaction, I felt that I had to seek the means of enlightenment—I was launched upon an incline and I could not stay my progress.

To anyone who had lived in the East and taken the trouble to study Eastern problems, it was obvious that vital changes were taking place around him. The astonishing development of Japan, the restlessness in India, the Young Turk revolution in the Ottoman Empire, the effervescence in Persia, the

dawning changes in China, and the growing impatience of the Egyptian Nationalists were, individually, of seeming small account, but collectively they provided a proof of impending changes impossible to ignore.

Those movements had generally a nationalistic tendency. The patriotic writings of forgotten poets were revived, ancient glories were recalled. The desire for nationalization—with the exception perhaps of China, where the movement was at that time more liberal than nationalist—apparently tenaciously held.

How deep then, did this current of nationalism run? How sincere and how wide was this desire for advancement? Above all, how great was the determination behind these desires? And then an even deeper problem—were these movements connected or purely local? Was there a power coordinating the whole with the ultimate object of clearing out the European and, in particular, of snatching India from the claws of the British lion? These were questions which demanded an answer.

Glancing back over events which had occurred during the past century, one realized the fact that Europe had imposed her civilization on practically the whole Eastern world. The universities of England, France, Germany and America, to which Orientals flocked in ever-increasing numbers, served to disseminate Western ideals, encourage the free expression of opinions and urged the obligation to progress in the hearts of peoples long regarded by Europeans as inferior—in other words, the aim of the European and American Universities was to raise a lower mentality to their own high intellectual and political levels. Furthermore, the democratic

systems of England and America were intensively studied by Oriental students and the lessons to be learnt from the historical struggles of their peoples, resulting in their present liberal constitutions, were taken seriously to heart.

It would be both unreasonable and illogical to suppose that century-long association between West and East would not awaken in the heart of an Oriental desires for emulation, or that continued study of European history would not point a moral and prove an incentive to build on the same lines as the people of the West. The prolonged environment of the new progress, introduced by European nations, perforce made its influence increasingly felt.

Nearly, if not all, Eastern nations have the instinct of an historical past, nearly all have at some period or another played an important part in the world's history. It was not to be supposed that the memory of their achievements had been entirely obliterated, or that new ambitions, awakened by the examples ever before them, would not revive these dormant instincts.

The debt which Asia owed to Europe was incalculable, yet Europe had been paid her full interest by the increase of her commerce, the employment of her people and the experience she had gained. The added responsibilities of colonial development had, of themselves, kept alive the virility of the European nations by giving an incentive to the adventuring of their sons in the diverse management of affairs and men in the distant lands of their colonial possessions.

On the other hand, so occupied had the European nations become with the competition for colonial expansion, that little regard was paid to the effect

of that expansion on the indigenous populations. The seeking of new markets and the development of existing ones had become a mania of foreign policy. The protection of these interests necessitated corresponding military obligations, which were measured in terms of the strongest rival, and when the burden of defence became too heavy for one nation to support, it sought an ally, whose association would divide the expenditure and, at the same time, provide the necessary superiority of force.

The statesmen of Europe had become so engrossed in these problems that they paid scant attention to the repercussion of their rival policies on the Eastern mind. Yet the East was slowly yet definitely transforming. The question was, what did this transformation portend? Did it foreshadow the wane of Europe's long predominance? Did it mean the dawn of a new era in which the Eastern peoples were preparing to assert themselves? If so, it became an imperative duty for Europeans to take stock of developments on which their welfare and happiness would depend.

All these questions burdened my mind for many months. It was obvious that the problems could only be studied in an Eastern country—moreover, an Eastern country free from European domination. This last consideration was a most important one, for it was essential that in order to come into contact with the trend of Oriental thought, which I wished particularly to study, I had to avoid an atmosphere tainted with propaganda. That could not be done so long as I was a member of a European community. To arrive at any result, I must merge myself into the Oriental as far as possible, absorb his ideas, see with his eyes, and hear with his ears, to the fullest

extent possible to one bred in British traditions. I considered the advisability of going to China. I abandoned it. The language would be too great a handicap, and I did not feel myself equal to mastering an alphabet of five thousand letters ! I next considered Persia, but this country was divided into British and Russian spheres of influence, and the rival policies of the two powers, translated into Persian thought, would, I considered, have inevitably confused the issue.

And then I got an inspiration—Syria, Damascus ! French, I knew, was the “*lingua franca*” of Syria, and this language I spoke tolerably well ; then, too, I might learn Arabic, a language which would be useful to me, as an officer of the Indian Army.

In particular, the town of Damascus appeared to offer an ideal field for a study of a question of this nature. From time immemorial, it has been the gateway between the Eastern and Western worlds, and here, if anywhere, I would surely be able to come to some definite conclusions regarding Eastern ideals.

Damascus is the gateway between East and West. Arabia, of which Syria is a part, forms the keystone to the great arch of Mohammedan states, stretching from the Atlantic to the Western provinces of China. Open the Medina gate of Damascus and Arabia lies spread before you. Arabia, the Belgium of the East, over which the tide of war has flowed back and forth through countless ages, where the Arab race, secure in its sterile wastes, has watched the rise and fall of Empires, the passing of their peoples, and has survived them all. Arabia, the cradle of Islam, where still, after thirteen centuries, the pilgrims, strong in their beliefs, constant to the commands of

the founder of their faith, flock in their thousands to holy Mecca. Truly, Mohammed, when he instituted the pilgrimage, did more than impose a religious duty, his genius evolved a means of perpetual communication with the remotest corners of the Moslem world. The naked savage from Central Africa, taking two years to reach the Holy City, is there clothed in the simple linen shirt of ceremony ; the Indian Prince, discarding his silken robes, dons the same simple attire. Thus they are made equal in the sight of God.

In Mecca they meet in a spirit of brotherhood purely Mohammedan. There they exchange ideas and discuss events which have taken place in their widely flung countries, and, when at length they return to their native lands, they are surrounded by their relations and friends, eager to listen to the tale of their experiences. The most highly organized European press-propaganda sinks into insignificance compared with this gigantic dissemination of ideas.

To a lesser extent, the golden domes of Kadhemain, Kerbela and Nejef, the holy places of the Shiah¹ world, situated in Mesopotamia, beckon their thousands of Persian and Indian pilgrims to bemoan the death of the martyrs with wailings. While the whole of Christendom regards with reverence the birth-place and the Calvary of the Founder of their faith.

Thus from a religious point of view, Arabia is of considerable importance. Regarded in a political sense, it is not less deserving of attention. The day will surely come when the Arabian Peninsula will become a political entity. Its influence in the affairs of the Mohammedan and Eastern world will be

¹ The Mohammedan religion is divided into many sects. The two principal divisions, however, are the Sunni and Shiah.

PILGRIMS ON THE JEDDAH-MECCA ROAD.



"TRULY, MOHAMMED, WHEN HE INSTITUTED THE PILGRIMAGE, DID MORE THAN IMPOSE A RELIGIOUS DUTY, HIS GENIUS EVOLVED A MEANS OF PERPETUAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE REMOTEST CORNERS OF THE MOSLEM WORLD."

increasingly felt. Our understanding of the Arab question, and our treatment of its people may one day prove to be the decisive factor in a war between Europe and the Eastern world, or between those fixed in their belief of an all-powerful Deity, and those denying His existence.

Geographically, Arabia occupies a position of outstanding strategical importance, as a glance at the map will show. Its coasts command the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, it flanks the great salt artery from Suez to Aden, and it occupies a similar position to the land routes of Persia.

Yes, Providence has placed the Arab peoples on one of the most important spots on the globe. Arabia is in many respects a cruel country, a country of intense cold and devastating heat, of noble deeds and savage crimes, of undying friendships and everlasting enmities; a country of extremes, but a country which has bred a race of men whose fathers once shook Europe to its foundations.

Here were sufficient enticements to encourage me to go to Syria, and a year's leave being due to me in 1913, I left India to go to England on a short visit, in order to permit myself to complete my arrangements for my journey and stay in Syria, and so it was that, on May 20th, 1913, my wife and I boarded the Lloyds Trentino steamer which would take us to Beyruth.

CHAPTER II

A CONVERT TO THE ARAB CAUSE

JUST one week later we were in sight of our destination. Dimly on the horizon, showing blue through the morning mist, the indistinct outline of the Lebanon mountains heralded our approach to land. As the steamer rent the carpet of the sea towards its goal, the distant mountains took bolder shape and displayed their varied wares of palms and vineyards, whose cool green shades brought out in ravishing contrast the red-roofed villages sown about their slopes.

At length, rounding the point which conceals the small harbour of Beyrouth, the town lay spread before our contented gaze. Here too, vermilion-red roofs predominated, but the yellow and white walls of the houses, with their green shutters, toned down the brilliant red to a pleasing contrast.

The town of Beyrouth lies sheltered behind the Ras¹ and spreads along a curving bay. The so-called port is but a small pool of salt water protected by a sea wall flung in a curve, to protect this miniature basin from the south-west gales. As we crept through its narrow entrance, we saw before us the rusty, riddled remains of a small Turkish cruiser, which had been sunk by the Italians two years previously and which had been left half-submerged,

¹ Cape.

just as it was, to the corrosion of the wind and water, in a manner truly characteristic of Turkish inertia.

As is usual in all Eastern ports, we were quickly surrounded by a motley collection of boatmen soliciting a fare to shore—for the harbour boasted of no quays—and it was necessary to pay the exorbitant fee demanded to cross the forty metres of dirty water separating us from the custom sheds.

In Europe, one's passport interests no one save the passport officials and one's luggage-labels hang, uninterfered with, to the handles of their boxes; but in Beyrouth it appeared to be otherwise, for when I handed my passport across the table, all those standing round craned their necks forward to catch a glimpse of it. And when I turned to order the porter to take up my luggage, to my surprise I saw two well-dressed Syrians wearing fezes, squatting down on their heels, deciphering the labels.

Later, when I mentioned the matter to a Syrian friend, he was not in the least surprised.

"We people of Beyrouth," said he, "are by nature inquisitive and born gossips. The arrival of strangers, especially Britishers, in our country interests us, and it is only natural that we should want to know who they are and what their business is. It gives us something new to talk about—your own arrival was noised about the town in a few hours, and all wanted to know why a British officer had come to Syria. The times are critical and big events are in the offing."

He was evidently right, although I only heard this explanation some days later, for the very evening of our arrival I observed two young Syrians in the hotel lounge gazing upon me with apparent interest

and obviously anxious to approach me. I did not discourage them, for my purpose was to talk to all and sundry, and soon we were exchanging ideas on different subjects.

Suddenly one of them lowered his voice and asked me in a whisper : " When are you British coming to free our country from the Turk ? " I was staggered. Here was I come expressly to find out if there might be a widespread conspiracy to expel my countrymen from India, and I had not been six hours in this country before I was asked when they were coming as its deliverers !

I was greatly surprised, but I did my best to conceal the fact. One does not arrive in a foreign country and immediately begin to discuss means of transferring the welfare of its inhabitants to an alien government. Moreover, I was suspicious. Who were these young fellows—students they appeared to be—asking these highly indiscreet questions? I asked : " How do you mean, free your country ? " " We will die rather than remain under the Turk, and the time of our deliverance is near," he answered. His vehement tone, the fanatical look in his eyes and the emotional quaver in his voice were sufficient to kill all suspicion. " If England will, she can make our deliverance the more certain. Let her send her fleet here and the country will rise as one man to welcome her."

" My word ! " I thought, " this is rather strong meat for my first meal." " I am afraid," I answered, " that I know little about politics; I have come here to learn Arabic and to pass my leave in this sole occupation." " I quite understand," he said, and gave me a knowing smile.

We stayed in Beyrouth a week and during this

time I was frequently approached in a similar and even franker manner.

I found the situation extremely embarrassing. I did not wish to appear to be unsympathetic, for in my heart, I was partial to their ambitions, but I was not at all anxious to get mixed up with matters of this nature. The international situation with regard to Turkey was delicate. Asia Minor had recently been acknowledged by the British as a German sphere of influence and, before giving me my passport, the Foreign Office had cautioned me as to my activities and even prohibited me from visiting certain areas.

Nevertheless, it was useless my telling the Syrian Nationalists—for such they proved to be—that I was not an agent of the British Government, or that I had come there merely to study. The fact that I was a British officer visiting their country, was sufficient for them frankly to open their hearts to me and discuss their plans and aspirations.

They showed a limitless faith in our country by thus confiding in me, not questioning for a moment whether or not I might betray them, and taking my sympathy and loyalty as a matter of course. Indeed, the confidence they had in England at this time was unbounded, their belief in British integrity supreme, and the faith that England was the one nation capable of supporting them in their coming fight for freedom—for that is what they were aiming at—universal. I frankly repeated again and again that I had nothing to do with these matters, that I was a nobody and without influence; it was of no avail. My ignorance was construed as reticence; my inability to answer pertinent questions as easily-to-be-understood caution! Gradually, and in spite

of my own volition, I was led to know more and more of their plans and even to be present at their councils.

These associations were evidently suspected by the German and Turkish authorities, who were informed, no doubt, that I was seen frequently in the company of the chief Syrian patriots and, in consequence, I received an even greater attention from their Secret Service than did the Syrian plotters themselves. Indeed, the German authorities appeared to attribute to me a far greater importance than the facts warranted, for my interest in the drama being played was simply that of an observer. I took absolutely no active part in any intrigue. At this period I barely understood what the real aims of the conspirators were. It was simply that fate decreed that I should have reached Syria at a time when the situation was critical—for two great conspiracies were afoot—two stages were being set, and both parties were so engrossed in rehearsing their several parts, that I doubt if any of the actors had any realization whatsoever of the ghastly tragedies which would be enacted when the curtains rose upon their several performances.

It was strange to find that the same situation prevailed in Syria as in India. In both countries the governed were seeking the overthrow of the governing authority, and, most interesting to observe, the ruling power was European in the one case, and Eastern in the other.

After ten days' sojourn in Beyrouth, the heat being excessive, we decided to go up into the mountains, and being informed that the air of Bahamdoun was the purest and freshest in all Syria—thither we went.

The Lebanon have a charm and a beauty all their own. They are rugged and, in general, treeless.

Here and there, a group of pines adds colour to an otherwise severe landscape, but in spite of the lack of forests, the natural shades are softer and more harmonious than in more luxuriant mountain ranges, while there is something in the atmosphere which appeals strongly to the imagination.

The intense blue sky makes hope surge limitless. The rugged scenery, unsurpassed in its beauty, fills the heart with inspiration. A sweeping glance to the westward and the eye beholds the heaving plain of the Mediterranean, a silken carpet spread out for the commerce of the world. Here are the ingredients of life—energy, inspiration and hope—and envy fills one's heart for the people set down by Providence in this region, where every feature vividly recalls to the mind the glories of the past. The courageous initiative of the Phoenician traders, the creative genius of the Greeks, the ordered power of Rome, and the inspired bravery of the Saracens. And then with a shock we are brought to earth by the recollection that the Turk holds these fair lands in thrall, that it is a heritage wasted through inefficiency, impoverished by a criminal administration, sucked dry by a rapacious officialdom.

My own pleasure was greatly marred by the fact that shortly after my arrival in Bahamdoun, I noticed, that wherever I went, I was followed, only too obviously and at no great distance, by human "watch-dogs," whose type varied, so that I came to recognize three distinct breeds—one, rather portly, who moved heavily in trying to keep my own more active frame within view—one, rather foppish-looking, who carried always a string of amber beads and swaggered in his gait, and one, more humble in his mien, but more assiduous in his attentions.

Wherever I went, one of the three was close behind. Their surveillance was so plainly evident as to be ridiculous, and at first I paid them little attention. Then, early one morning, when I had just left my hotel to explore a valley lying far below, and to visit a red-roofed hamlet I had observed overlooking it and clinging precariously, as it appeared, to a jutting ridge, I caught sight of, and recognized, one of the sleuths, who for three days had dogged my footsteps.

I felt truly annoyed—I had risen early and felt in good form, I had eaten a satisfactory breakfast, I felt joyful. The bright blue sky, the fresh mountain air, and the glorious view had encouraged my good spirits, and here, right at the start of my voyage of exploration, a tax was put upon my good humour by the knowledge that my harmless peregrinations were to be the object of this annoying surveillance.

Bahamdoun is a land of vines. On every hand the stony slopes are terraced with vineyards, where the grape lies sprawling over the stony soil. Paths are few, and where found, wind, like narrow gullies, between the walls of the terraces, forcing us to progress in single file. One such path led from the village of Bahamdoun down to the valley a thousand feet below. This path dived unexpectedly between two houses, down the mountain side. I therefore walked slowly along until I reached this aperture and abruptly turned down it. I was immediately concealed by the houses from the inquisitive eyes of my unwelcome companion. I then proceeded to run, as well as the rocky surface allowed, down the path, till, reaching an abrupt turn, I came to a sudden halt behind the bend, where I was effectively concealed.

I had not long to wait for signs of the fop with the amber beads—I could hear the stones rattling as he laboured his way in pursuit.

I waited, till I judged by the sound that he had reached the bend behind which I was concealed, and then stood forth. I had judged the matter to a nicety. In his haste he nearly crashed into me, in spite of the effort he made to put a brake upon his impetus. The shock he received from my sudden appearance afforded me some slight compensation for the inconvenience he had caused me. His mouth dropped open, his eyes boggled and he stood there looking like an urchin, surprised in a raid on the jam cupboard.

“ Well,” I asked in English, “ what do you want ? ” As he did not answer, but continued to stare at me in surprised stupidity, I repeated the question in French.

He stammered something about having to go to the village down the hillside.

“ Well, go ! ” I bellowed and applied my foot to the seat of his baggy trousers. He glared at me a moment with a baleful eye, as if to measure his chances in a more spirited argument, appeared to judge the matter in my favour, and, burdened by a slight limp, continued his pretended journey, while I myself took my pleasure elsewhere, and, for once, unaccompanied.

Although I had effectively dealt with *one* representative of the Turkish counter-espionage organization, the incident, which was presumably duly reported, drew upon me even greater attentions, for it appeared to have the effect of confirming the Turkish authorities and German officers in their false suspicions. I suppose they argued that the fact that I

showed some slight annoyance at being followed by their local Sherlock Holmes proved that I had sinister doings to conceal.

Be that as it may, I soon had proof enough of their further interest in myself. First, my letters failed to reach me, or if they did eventually find me, it was only too evident that they had been tampered with.

Next, I was informed, after a three weeks' anxious inquiry from the Ottoman bank at Beyrouth, that my long-expected money from England had not arrived. I was, in this manner, pinned down to Bahamdoun and a limit made to the extent of my movements, since without funds I could not travel.

At this time, there arrived at our hotel a very beautiful yet mysterious young Egyptian lady, who for some extraordinary reason, elected to use as her bed-chamber a tent pitched on the flat roof of the hotel, despite the fact that two excellent rooms were available in a more convenient location downstairs.

This eccentric damsel next proceeded to make love to my young Arabic teacher—a senior student of the American College at Beyrouth—and having, as she thought, made a suitable impression on his simple mind, she began to question him insidiously regarding the objects of my visit.

Here again, the method was somewhat crude, or, the instrument ill-chosen, for the object of her attentions and her inquiries were so obvious, that the young fellow at once asked my advice regarding the matter.

We arranged between us that she should be suitably informed—but I fear she must have been somewhat puzzled, since the reason of my visit

varied every few days. She must, too, have considered me a man of parts, as she was informed that my future activities were to be directed towards such varied matters as the construction of a boot factory, the welfare of orphan children, and the growing of silk worms. She knew English and used to take every opportunity of seating herself near us, and while her eyes coyly spoke of her false love, her ears greedily soaked in such scraps of our conversation as we wanted her to hear. In this manner, guile met guile and we were childishly pleased with our part in this little pantomime. We were still no nearer discovering, however, the object of her selecting for her bed-chamber a position at once so elevated and draughty.

My wife and I occupied a bedroom on the ground floor. The window was low and heavily barred and boasted two bright green shutters, their colour vanity but their bulk a protection, for Mohammedan and Christian still snatched at revenge for past wrongs when they could catch each other off their guard. On account of the heat, however, we left the window open and the shutters thrown back.

One night I heard a queer rustling noise, accompanied by whisperings outside the window, and on glancing out noticed that one of the shutters was at right angles to the sill instead of being placed flush with the outside wall, thus offering possible cover for an inquisitive eavesdropper. Creeping quietly to the window, I suddenly gave the shutter as hard a push as the limited space imposed by the iron bars permitted, it was checked in its backward swing by some soft but bulky obstacle behind—a surprised squeak, the rustle of a dress, and the scurry of departing feet followed each other in

rapid succession. I rushed out through the hall and was in the act of opening the front door, with the intention of intercepting the eavesdropper, when the hotel proprietor, Habib by name, came hurrying up. "What is the matter?" he asked. I briefly explained. "I know who it was," he said, and without further words, he kicked off his shoes, ran up the stone steps leading to the roof, crept on tip-toe to the tent and, pulling down the top of one of the sides, peeped in. He tip-toed back to me and whispered: "As I thought, she is not there," and then beckoning me to follow him, led me back to his own room and carefully closing the door, offered me a chair and a cigarette.

"That woman," he said, "is a Turkish spy and that fact is well known. She has been put here to watch you, and every evening she waits outside your window to hear what you and your wife are talking about. Later in the night she is visited by one to whom she reports what she has overheard, or *pretends* she has heard."

"Good Lord," I said angrily, "why did you not tell me all this before? You have always told me that you liked the English and hated the Turk—I think that your omission to do so was very unfriendly."

"True," he replied, "but remember, I am a Turkish subject and I run a danger if I interfere with their arrangements—I give you this explanation now, because you have *yourself* discovered that this woman comes to your window and that fact I can tell the Turks."

His excuse was a reasonable one and I understood the difficult position in which he was placed, for I had already heard how unpleasant the Turks were

to those who interfered with their plans—so I thanked him for what he had told me and bade him good-night.

It was Habib's invariable custom to be present during all meals to see that his guests were being properly attended to, but to my surprise, he was absent the following day, both from breakfast and lunch. I asked the servant where he was.

"He is very ill," he replied.

I was astounded, for he had seemed in perfect health the previous evening.

"What is the matter with him?" I asked.

"I don't know," he answered shortly. So I went to his room to see for myself. He was not there, and on inquiry I found he had left the hotel. The hotel servants either did not know, or refused to tell me where he had gone to, but after careful inquiries in the village I found one who led me to a rather dilapidated single-storeyed house, the door of which was ajar. My guide pointed to the door, mumbled something which I could not hear and hastily departed. I knocked, but receiving no answer, I entered and found myself in a dark, low, and narrow room. At first, owing to the contrast with the glare from outside, I could distinguish little. After a time, my eyes becoming used to the gloom, I made out a form lying on a sort of mattress on the ground. I went over to it and kneeling down, looked to see if it was Habib. It was, but hardly to be recognized. He was only half-conscious and moaning pitifully. His jaws were clamped tightly together and when I laid my hand on his forehead, I found it bathed in perspiration.

I now made out a woman, crouching by him on the far side and weeping quietly. She told me she was

his sister, and when I asked her what was wrong with her brother, she replied: "Sir, I know not. Late last night he sent for me—I found him in great pain. He told me that he had drunk a cup of coffee and soon afterwards felt in agony and very ill. He said that he felt he was dying and wished to die in his own home, so we carried him here, and he is as you see him."

"Has a doctor seen him?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied, "but he does not know what is wrong with him."

I told her to come and see me if she needed any help and left her sorrowfully, for I had a great liking for Habib. Further, I was suspicious of his state and feared foul play. Later on I found I had good reason for my suspicion.

On returning to the hotel, I found a Turkish officer seated in the lounge in close conversation with a most unpleasant-looking fellow, who turned out to be the new hotel manager, who had come to replace Habib. The officer gave this man a nudge as I passed by and glanced meaningly in my direction. It seemed as if their conversation had had to do with myself. However, I paid little attention to the matter and settled down to the preparation of my Arabic lesson.

During the afternoon an event of interest, to myself at any rate, occurred. The beautiful spy left the hotel; her departure proving at once a confession of guilt and an acknowledgment of failure.

But it seemed that this spoiling of their plans in no way deterred the Turks from continuing their annoyances.

That same night my wife and I had turned in late and had dropped off to sleep, when suddenly, we

were awakened by the sharp bark of a dog outside our window, this was changed to a yelp of pain following the dull thud of a kick. Then for a long while there was silence, and I was just about to drop off to sleep once more, when I heard the main hotel door being quietly opened. I recognized the squeak of its rusty hinge. This was unusual, as the door was on other nights invariably kept locked—it used to be Habib's last office to lock this door just before he went to bed. The new manager, it seemed, was not so careful. Under ordinary circumstances the opening of this door so late at night would not have caused me the least anxiety, as it might well have been occasioned by a late arriving guest. In the present instance, however, whoever was opening it was trying to do so with an excess of caution, as the interrupted squeaks of the hinge and the pauses which ensued between them advertised. The illuminated dial of my watch showed the time as 2.30 a.m. These proceedings were so unusual that I determined to see what they meant. After a time, the protest of the front door ceased, and there followed a period of intense silence, which was rudely interrupted by the scrape of a table on the stone floor of the entrance hall. I got out of bed, and going to the door, placed my hands upon the handle, with the intention of going out to see what these strange doings might mean. To my surprise, I felt the handle, apparently of its own volition, falling a fraction at a time beneath my fingers. For the first time I realized that these proceedings were meant for my benefit, and that someone was trying to open my door secretly and cautiously, and that he was employing this most unusual method of introducing himself.

There was no key to the door, but it was, as a matter of fact, fastened on the inside by a small sliding bolt. I was starting to withdraw this when my wife, who had also risen and was standing by my side, seized me by the arm and called out to me not to open the door. No sooner had she raised her voice than we heard the thud of bare feet hurriedly leaving the hotel, the restive stamping of a horse and then the sound of galloping hoofs. By the time I had wrenched open the door and run to the hotel entrance, there was no sign of anyone, only in the distance I heard the dull beating of the horse's hoofs dying away down the road.

Up till now I had regarded the attentions paid to myself as amusing if, occasionally, annoying. This night's episode, however, showed me that matters were more serious than I had imagined.

The next morning, therefore, I was driven to borrowing some money from a kind Syrian friend and went to Beyrouth to ask the advice of Mr. Camberbatch, the British Consul. I was informed that he was away on leave in Cyprus and the Syrian who was acting for him suggested so many futile remedies that I left him in disgust and went and bought myself a revolver. Then I went to the bank and was calmly informed that there had been a "mistake" and that my money had been received three weeks previously! Whereupon, I drew out the full amount and returned to Bahamdoun quite pleased with my day's work, for I now had the means to protect myself, and the money which would enable me to go elsewhere.

That night after dinner, I had my coffee brought to my room. I was feeling well and pleased at the prospect of leaving. Immediately I drank it, I

remarked it had a strange flavour. Soon I was filled with a strange nausea and was next seized with vomiting and the most ghastly pains, which grew rapidly worse till I was writhing in agony.

My poor wife, terrified, called the hotel manager and ordered him to send at once for a doctor. She told me afterwards that this brute simply stood in the doorway and grinned at my convulsions.

A Polish lady, who was staying at the hotel, happily took complete charge of me. She, apparently suspecting the cause of my strange malady, gave me mustard and water and salt water, which had most unpleasant results, and dosed me with quantities of milk. I have myself very little recollections of what took place, being mostly delirious with the pain, but by daylight I became conscious, though still suffering extremely.

About nine o'clock, a Syrian doctor arrived. My wife angrily asked him why he had not come at once ; he assured her that he had only just got the message and had come immediately.

"But last night," she said, "why did you not come when I sent for you ?"

"I assure you I got no message," he replied. As he turned out to be a very decent fellow and was very good to me, I feel sure he was not in any way to blame. When, later, my wife demanded an explanation from the hotel manager, he said that the doctor was not at his house when his servant went there.

The doctor examined me, asked a lot of questions and then asked for the cup which had contained the coffee. But this could not be found. He told my wife that the symptoms she described were those due to poisoning, probably arsenical.

Evidently I had been treated in the same manner as the wretched Habib, but, as so frequently happens in the Orient, those administering the poison calculated that I, being a European, would require a specially heavy dose, an unintentional compliment to a supposed superior stamina and to this fortunate misjudgment I undoubtedly owed my life. The reaction was too drastic and my stomach too soon rebelled against this treatment.

It took me some days to recover, but as soon as I felt well enough, we left for Damascus, which was destined to be my headquarters for the next nine months.

My stay in Bahamdoun was not wasted, for it gave me an insight into Turkish methods I was not likely to forget; their stupid treatment of myself, at least, showed me more clearly than anything else would have done, their fear of anyone who might be considered as an expert observer. Later the reason for this fear will be evident—meantime, I felt convinced that if they went to these lengths, there was obviously something of importance to conceal, and I was determined to find out what it was.

Apart from this consideration, this brutal treatment, like the poison they employed, was too drastic. It simply made me the more obstinate, and I was determined that no form of violence should drive me from the country or from carrying out the task I had set myself. Moreover, I now had a deep sympathy for the Syrian and Arab peoples. In a sense, I had suffered with them, and whereas, when I first arrived in the country, I was innocent of any intention of spying out the land, or taking any part in the Arab movement, I now determined to sacrifice

everything to promote Arab freedom, and to employ every means for obtaining knowledge, military or political, which might assist in the achievement of that object. Turkish barbarity made me a convert to the Arab cause.

CHAPTER III

DAMASCUS, THE ETERNAL CITY

I SHALL never forget my first view of Damascus seen from the windows of the train which "chugged" its way down the narrow pass from which the waters of the Barada, leaping and sparkling in the bright sunlight, fall in musical cascades to the valley below.

On either side, grey limestone hills hug the railway close. These hills are barren alike of vegetation or habitation—sad looking.

Farther down they curve away to the north and south making room for the valley to stretch its lovely limbs and are here a rosy pink, which harmonizes to perfection with the background of a sky of milky blue.

In sharp contrast to the barren hills the valley is thick with glorious vegetation—a sea of green of every tone billows away to the eastward. Poplar, walnut, almond, orange, and countless other trees, vie with each other to contribute with their varying shades to a share in this harmony of tones and, from the midst of their luxuriance, the gleaming white minarets of the mosques stand out in tall and graceful slenderness.

It is said, with what truth I know not, that Damascus boasts of over three hundred mosques—I have never counted them, but their gleaming domes are sprinkled lavishly about the city and, from a

distance, shine white above the trees "like pearls upon a casket of jade."

Nor does a closer acquaintance with Damascus disappoint; being one of the oldest cities in the world a sense of its antiquity is at once impressed strongly upon the mind.

Its ancient "suqs" or markets, wind about within its battlemented walls without method; here covered with wood or corrugated iron, there open to the sky, here at one level, there at another, for they are built upon the ruins of the past.

Each trade has its own "suq." In one the blacksmiths and coppersmiths beat the yielding metals into shape on the very edge of the roadway, and the clang of their hammers echo down the narrow streets in varying musical tones, while inquisitive and grubby urchins stand enthralled before the different craftsmen to see the cascade of sparks fly forth at each stroke of their brown and sinewy arms. In another, the silk merchant hangs out his bright-hued fabrics, so that your shoulder brushes them as you pass his shop and the semi-gloom of the covered way is brightened by a kaleidoscope of brilliant colours.

Suddenly round a corner odours of jasmine and attar of roses, or other perfumes, assail the nostrils.

Strings of camels laden with bulky packages silently plod the unpaved streets and deliver their burdens at one or other of the vast domed khans or caravansaries—some of which date from the eleventh century—as they did centuries before even these khans were built.

Damascus is not a hybrid like Cairo, Algiers or Tunis, it is not simply an Eastern city, it is the personification of the East and will continue to be so, so long as one stone remains upon another, for

those stones still bear witness of those who carved them, as its dust contains their bones, and the air their hovering spirits.

From its birth until to-day, conquering and alien armies from the north and the south, the east and the west, have in turn assailed and submerged the city in blood and fire. One by one its captors passed away and on their going the city arose once more, ever true to its past and conscious of its destiny.

Many of its private dwellings are palaces of Oriental splendour, unsuspected and undreamed of from the street. They have no massive gateways to advertise the beauty which lies within. Instead, their small wooden doorways, lacking paint and somewhat crooked, are like those of the humble dwellings to right and left. But passing down a narrow passage leading from the street, the visitor suddenly emerges upon a courtyard, paved with black and white marble, its sides planted with orange trees, whose blossoms fill the air with their sweet fragrance, or whose golden fruit gladden the eye, according to the season of the year. In the centre of the courtyard a raised basin of coloured marble pours out its cooling waters in a gently falling stream, whose music, like tinkling fairy bells, lulls the senses to repose. Round this square rise the graceful marble walls of the main dwelling ; within which lofty, cool rooms—marvels of Oriental splendour—dazzle the eye with their magnificence.

The gardens surrounding the town are superb. The variety and abundance of their fruits and flowers is amazing. The Barada, and other streams ensure a bountiful supply of water, so that, even in the hottest season of the year, a cool refuge may be found within the gardens' fragrant shade.

Not less interesting than its buildings, its streets and its gardens are its inhabitants and visitors. Representatives from practically every Oriental country in the world are to be met with in its streets, for, apart from those who come from the nearer Oriental countries, the pilgrimage completes the quota from more distant regions.

There can be but few cities so truly representative of the Orient, or which gives such a complete expression of the East, not only as it is to-day, but as it has existed for a thousand years and will continue into the dim future.

Such was the city as I later got to know it, or partly to know it, for one might live there for years and it would still have new lessons to impart and fresh beauties to reveal.

On the day of our arrival, September 20th, 1913, however, I was filled with keen anticipation to explore its wonders and get to know its peoples. But it seemed as if my pleasure was to be perpetually interfered with.

We had reached Damascus in the early afternoon and settled ourselves down in the National Hotel.

In the evening, my wife and I were sitting in its marble-paved hall, after dinner, having our coffee, when a visitor was announced. I was naturally surprised, since, to the best of my knowledge, I knew not a soul in the place. Nor, as it turned out, did I know this particular caller. I was surprised to see before me an officer, whom at first I assumed to be a Turk. On his head he wore an astrakhan cap. The left breast of his well-fitting uniform was adorned by a row of medal-ribbons, at his side dangled a sword, and his attire was completed

by a smart pair of riding boots and plated spurs. He looked every inch a soldier and a smart one.

He introduced himself to me, after saluting my wife courteously and gracefully, as "Major von H——, German instructor of the Damascus Cavalry Brigade." Having ordered refreshment for him, I looked inquiringly at him to know the nature of his business. He immediately came to the point.

"Why have you come to Damascus?" he asked.

"To learn Arabic," I replied.

"But why to Damascus, why not go to Cairo or elsewhere?"

"Because," I answered, "I have been informed that the purest Arabic is that which is taught here."

"But why bring your wife?"

"Good Lord!" I said, "I am a newly-married man; it would be rather strange, would it not, if I left her behind me when I travelled?"

"Well," he said, "the Turks don't believe that you have come here to learn Arabic and if you take my advice you will leave at once."

"Look here!" I retorted roughly, nettled by his impudence, "I understood you to say that you were a *German* instructor of the Turkish army. Might I ask whether you come to me on behalf of the German officers or as a representative of the Turkish authorities? If the former, you will forgive my saying it, but I don't see what the devil it has got to do with you, but if the latter, I hope the Turks will come themselves to ask me these questions."

"I did not intend to make you angry," he said, "but merely to give you a bit of friendly advice, and if you are wise you will take it."

"I am greatly obliged," I said, "but as far as I know, England is not at war with Turkey, or, at any

rate, she was not yesterday, and therefore, I have every right to remain, which I fully intend doing."

Whereupon he rose, put on his astrakhan cap, which he had removed, saluted and strode away, his sword clanking on the marble floor.

I sat for an hour, pondering over this visit. What did it mean? Why was I being pestered in this manner? His words conveyed a clear warning. Moreover, they proved that the German officers and the Turks had been mutually discussing my presence in the city. "The Turks do not believe that you have come here to learn Arabic," he had said. I had informed the Turkish authorities that I intended staying for a year. Was it this length of time which had aroused unjustified suspicions? Their treatment of me was certainly most unusual. Other officers of the Indian Army had previously visited Syria in order to learn Arabic and had not been put to the least inconvenience. Why then, had I been singled out for this extraordinary treatment? There was only one possible explanation.

There must be something important going on, concerning which they were particularly anxious that I should not get knowledge. They could not expel me openly, for such action would have resulted in the British Government demanding to know the reason, and there were no valid grounds for such procedure. So it appeared they were trying to frighten me into leaving of my own volition. Well, it was no good speculating, time only would show what this behaviour meant. Meantime, I would keep my eyes and ears open and quietly continue my study of the problems which had brought me to the country. My immediate task was to make friends with all and sundry.

I lost no time, therefore, in calling on the British Consul, Mr. Devy, who treated me with the greatest kindness. He lent me his ponies on which to play polo—for Damascus boasted a polo ground—and by this means I met several of the Turkish officers and renewed my acquaintance with Major von H——. I made no reference to his visit on the day of my arrival, nor did he himself again refer to it ; in fact, we became, outwardly at any rate, good friends. Mr. Devy introduced me to his own friends of several nationalities and they, in turn, to others. In this manner, and in a short time, I had a large circle of acquaintances, many of whom soon became my close friends.

At first, as was only to be expected, my mind was somewhat confused in this cosmopolitan atmosphere and it was only gradually that I was able to separate and analyse my impressions of German, French, Turk, Syrian, and Arab circles. It was necessary, however, that I should do this and that I should treat each nationality as a separate subject, compare the attitude of each to the other, gauge the influence each was exerting, appreciate their aims and policies, discard the unessential and retain in my memory only what was necessary for the task I had set myself. I say "retain in my memory" and this was my chief difficulty, for in view of my treatment, I was loath to keep any written notes, fearing lest the Turks might not scruple to search my room.

I was greatly relieved to find that I was no longer being followed as I had been in Bahamdoun. I had now determined to get into touch with the Syrian Nationalists and Arab patriots, but in doing this I would have to exercise extreme caution, for it was quite possible that the Turks might employ agents as

pseudo-patriots to get in touch with me, and tempt me to confide my views to them.

I was therefore extremely reserved with all who approached me until I had assured myself that they were genuine. My caution was fully justified, for two such attempts were actually made. Happily, in each instance, the agent employed overdid his part. It is true that neither of them posed as being Syrians or Arab Nationalists, but they pretended to be violently anti-Turk and to have a love for and admiration of England beyond credence. As was my custom with strangers, I let them do most of the talking, and in this I had no difficulty, my only trouble was to get them to stop. To their abuse of the Turks, I protested my ignorance on so short an acquaintance, but enlarged upon my personal esteem of individual Turks, which was genuine. With regard to their praises of my own country, I displayed, I hope, a becoming modesty.

I had little difficulty in gaining touch with the Arab movement. The country was seething with sedition, yet strangely enough, the Turks, either through ignorance or carelessness, paid little heed to this smouldering fire of discontent, for I soon discovered that the determination of the Arab people to seek their freedom by the sword, was serious and widespread.

The manner in which the Nationalists discussed with me their hopes and fears was truly pathetic. They begged me, nay implored me, to lay their case before the British Government.

"Save God who knows our miseries, who can help us, except England? And if she will, she can deliver us and will thus earn the undying friendship of the whole Arab peoples," burst from the lips of one.

"It is better we perish as a nation than continue in this degradation," said another.

I feel quite sure that the general impression of the world is that the Arab revolt had its inception at Mecca, where it broke out in 1916, that it was greatly an instrument of British policy, and that it owed its transient success to the leadership of Feisal and Lawrence.

The facts are far distant from any of the above surmises, which have led to a total misunderstanding of the Arab peoples and their aims.

Let me state briefly what the situation was as I found it in 1913.

The people, both Christians and Mohammedans, had their hopes centred on their liberation, their hearts filled with a noble patriotism and the energy of their minds directed to the attainment of their political freedom.

The Turk had been a bad landlord, who had impoverished the country, squandered its revenues, oppressed its people and denied them even rudimentary justice.

Time and again, the people had been on the verge of revolution, but lack of cohesion, due principally to political divergencies and racial differences, delayed their hopes and upheld the Ottoman régime more effectively than did the Turkish bayonets.

For a short period—when the "Young Turks" seized power in Constantinople—the Syrians, in common with other minorities, had hoped for an alleviation of their state, but these hopes were soon shattered.

The longed-for reforms were indefinitely postponed, military exactions were increased and freedom of speech denied.

Under the iron rule of the Sultan Abdul Hamid, to criticize the government was treated as *lèse-majesté* and received its reward. Therefore, the lips of men remained closed—except in secret.

The Young Turk government, on its advent to power, broadcast to the world its promises to redress this abuse, and render to the people the first principle of modern freedom, and to encourage free and critical expression of opinion. It was soon evident, however, that this apparent concession was, in reality, nothing but a trap to make their political opponents declare themselves, which they unwittingly did and were dealt with accordingly.

In consequence, a great fear fell upon the land, a hatred, the greater for this deception, burned in the hearts of the people and, for good or evil, the Arab peoples under Turkish rule, Christian and Moslem alike, irrevocably determined to recover their freedom by force.

Branches of the “Al Ahad,” the widespread secret revolutionary society, came into being in every town and many villages of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia. So bitter was the universal hatred of the Turks, that an understanding was reached with some of the most powerful Arab chiefs and the Arab tribes on the one hand, and the Christian leaders on the other to unite for the common purpose of freeing the Arabian Peninsula from Turkish dominance.

When it is recalled that for centuries the Christian minorities had suffered periodical massacres and incredible injustices and indignities at the hands of the Turk-incited Moslem majority, the nature of this, apparently, unholy alliance may be appreciated.

Emissaries were despatched to the various Arab

chieftains to solicit their aid. With the exception of Ibn Rashid, ruler of Hail, who was definitely pro-Turkish and the Imam Yahya of the Yemen, the replies to these requests for assistance were favourable, so that it was possible to make fairly definite plans for a general outbreak.

The province of Basra, which the Turks always found most difficult to deal with, was selected as the place most suitable for the beginning of the revolt.

It was hoped that an outbreak in the Basra province would necessitate the despatch of reinforcements from the Turkish garrison in Baghdad, and that their departure, and the consequent weakening of the Baghdad garrison, would allow the Arabs in and around that city to rise in their turn, thus isolating the Turkish troops in the Basra area. Damascus, Palestine and the Hedjaz would revolt in succession. The Druses and the independent tribes of the interior would lend their aid.

In this manner it was hoped to contain the Turks in each province successively by a rapid sequence of carefully organized risings.

A revolution is not negative ; for success there must be a leader and, in the present instance, Ibn Sa'ud was almost unanimously elected as the natural champion of the Arab peoples.

All the time during which these desperate measures were being planned, the Turks and Germans showed no signs of having the least knowledge of them. It all seemed so unreal, so impossible, to think that anything could alter existing conditions. Living there quietly day by day, seeing everything outwardly so peaceful, seeing each man performing his daily task with quiet unconcern, and yet knowing that the day was not far distant, when the horrid

confusion of war and bloodshed might sweep the city like a pestilence, filled me with sadness. And yet, when talking with those who might take a leading part, I absorbed something of their enthusiasm, agreed with the necessity for the venture, and felt a desire to share their risks and perils.

One of my very special friends was a Syrian Christian, Haddad by name, who was later hung by the Turks. We used to meet outside Damascus, in some lonely place, and discuss the situation and the latest developments. One such meeting, in particular, I shall always remember; we had selected as our rendezvous, the ruins of an old mosque on the hills above Salhiyeh, a northern suburb of Damascus. We went to our meeting place by separate paths and met in the concealing shadow of the old wall, pierced by an archway, through which the distant snow-clad peak of Mount Hermon could be seen. Below us lay Damascus; far to the southward, over the Hauran Plain, we could dimly see the "Black Mountain," "Jebel al Druse," the mountain of the Druse; while beyond the city's gardens to the eastward, the desert stretched to the horizon.

It was a view which embraced all the characteristics of Arabia and was a fitting spot on which to discuss its destinies.

Haddad was anxious and depressed. The local El Ahad committee had received news from its counterpart in Baghdad. There were differences of opinion regarding important measures and policy. "It is always so," Haddad said bitterly, "our cause is ever put in jeopardy by local jealousies and selfish ambitions."

I comforted him by reminding him that it was inaction which always bred controversies. Once

the time for action had arrived, he would see that personal ambitions would disappear. For when men are fighting for their lives, they can give little thought to anything but to succeed in their dangerous enterprise.

I asked him if he could define the real motives prompting him and others like him to hazard their lives in the cause of freedom. "What," I asked, "do you understand by 'freedom'?"

He answered my question by putting another. "You are English, your characteristics, your mental outlook and your pride are the result of centuries of independence. Suppose a foreign country was to conquer England and deny you any expression of your own individuality, impose upon you a culture foreign to your taste, create a legislation alien to your customs and usage, would you consider yourself free?"

"God forbid!" I replied.

"We are in this state," he continued, "we are denied the free expression of our own individuality, equally as human beings and as a nation. Unjust taxation, unequal laws, privations, poverty; all these, and more, could be endured if only our minds were free to give expression to our national characteristics in our own way, for freedom is the emancipation of the soul. But the days of the Turk are numbered. It is no longer possible to keep a nation in subjection, especially a nation like the Arab."

As he spoke I glanced through the archway of the old mosque and my eyes rested idly on the distant snows of Mount Hermon; there seemed something queerly reminiscent in their whiteness, something which connected them with what he had just said, and then, once more, I remembered those distant

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snows of the Himalayas and the words of Sir Charles Cleveland.

Was this the answer to the riddle ?

I began to understand something of what freedom meant to these people. For us, it is a commonplace to talk of freedom, but for them the very thought of liberty would make their eyes shine and their hands tremble with emotion.

I might then liken the situation of the Arab peoples in 1913 to that of a woman of independent character, wedded to an overbearing man, who denies her all expression of her own personality. In the married state, such a condition drives the woman, nine times out of ten, into a lunatic asylum or to the divorce court ; with nations it drives them to revolt.

It was, above all things, a similar desire for the free expression of the nation's personality which was urging the Arab peoples to regain their liberty. In other words, their needs were spiritual rather than material. The soul of the Arab people was stirred, impelling the nation in a manner which no physical force could restrain.

Haddad had said that they could endure purely material injustices, implying thereby that even if the Turks governed them in an exemplary manner, even if they provided them with all the comforts of the flesh, yet, being unable to live their lives in their own manner, their hearts would be starved and they would still be slaves.

Was it not possible that all the nations of the East, whose minds had been sleeping for centuries, were being awakened by a similar urge, and were being impelled to seek this *liberté spirituelle*, as Haddad had expressed it ?

CHAPTER IV

FOREBODINGS OF STORM

WHEN, just previous to my coming to Syria, I had applied to the Foreign Office for the necessary passport to visit that country, I was asked to state what parts of Turkey I intended to visit. I replied that I did not wish to confine my visit to Syria, but would like to travel in Anatolia. I was warned not to do so, since Turkey was now formally recognized by the European Powers as a German sphere of influence and that my presence in Anatolia would probably be objected to by the Germans, and that if any such objections were raised, it would cause embarrassment to the British Government.

This showed clearly how anxious the latter was to keep strictly to the agreement and give Germany a clear field in Turkey.

In fact, the Germans had a wonderful opportunity in the Ottoman Empire, but they failed utterly to utilize it—even making full allowances for the difficulties they had in getting the Turk to respond to their efforts for improvement.

Quite apart from technical questions, such as army reform, Germany's greatest blunder was in failing to study the psychology of the Turks or Arabs. The German instructors I met spoke neither Turkish nor Arabic, consequently they failed utterly to understand the mentality of either of these

rates. To my intense astonishment, I discovered that instruction of the troops was being carried out through the medium of *French*.

German methods were not elastic enough to adapt themselves to a people unaccustomed to the iron discipline of their own army. Their energy was expended in the impossible task of attempting to create a German army out of Turkish material, and by not taking the least trouble to study the subject races of Turkey, they failed to observe the growth of the Arab movement, already a menace to the Turkish State. Consequently, they were not in a position to appreciate how great a danger it might prove to the Turks, either in the form of widespread rebellion in the time of peace or still more, as an instrument in the hands of an enemy, in time of war.

The Turks regarded the Arab with contempt. The German had no very great opinion of the Turk; what, then, would be their opinion of the Arab? They held no views on the subject, for the Arab did not exist, as far as they were concerned.

I found the German instructors extraordinarily busy, teaching men to ride, others to walk, with, of course, military precision, and yet others to use a machine gun, for, already, the Germans had appreciated the enormous influence this weapon would have in the next war. Once these daily duties were ended, however, their contact with the Oriental ceased and they withdrew to a splendid isolation. How jealously they guarded their exclusiveness, may be judged by the following incident, which affords a typical example:

Major von H—— had served on Mukhtar Pasha's staff during the Balkan War of 1911, but just before

he joined the Pasha's staff, he had formed a club, styled "The International Club" at Damascus. He and his brother officers drew up the Conditions of Membership and the other regulations necessary for an institution of this description.

The international character of this club was somewhat marred by "Rule 4," which stated in unequivocal terms, that no fez-wearing individual could be elected a member. This simple rule, at a stroke, eliminated any Oriental inhabitant of the country, including Turks, no matter what his status, from becoming a member of the club. The Arab head-dress, the Kafiyeh and Aghal, was not mentioned, for as I have already remarked, the Arab did not exist as far as the Germans were concerned.

When Major von H—— returned to Damascus after the conclusion of the Balkan War, he found to his horror, that a certain well-known Greek, Mr. V—— who sported a fez, had contrived to get elected to this select international institution. In his position as original founder of the club, the disgusted Major arbitrarily decreed a fresh election of all members. The intention was obvious. The fez-wearing Mr. V—— would lose his membership through the medium of the little black-ball. There had been such a commotion over the affair, that everyone knew its cause, not only the members of the club, but everyone in the city. An evening was set apart for the re-election of members and, in spite of the knowledge of what was impending, Mr. V——, showing considerable spirit, attended this meeting which was destined to eject him.

Immediately previous to the voting, he ordered champagne to be served to each of the guests, who debated among themselves the reason for this

unexpected liberality. No sooner, however, had the result of the voting been announced, and the absence of Mr. V——'s name noted, than the latter rose to his feet and invited the re-elected members to drink alike to the success of the club and damnation to the Germans—Pandemonium! Uproar! The cooler members hastened Mr. V—— away and conducted him to his house to prevent his receiving serious injury, if nothing worse.

Later in the evening, there called upon Mr. V—— two German representatives on behalf of Major von H——, who formally presented their cards and informed Mr. V—— that since he had insulted the German corps of officers, he must fight a duel, "and you must fight with a pistol," said Colonel S——, the principal second. "I shall do nothing of the kind," said Mr. V——. "Then you must fight with a sword," Colonel S—— insisted. "I have never had a sword in my hand in my life, and I have not the remotest idea how to use one," said Mr. V——. "Then you must go to Beyrouth for three weeks and learn its use," said Colonel S—— sternly. "I am certainly not going to do any such thing," said the obstinate Mr. V——. "I shall use neither sword nor pistol, in fact, I have not the least intention of fighting any duel whatsoever."

This was an extraordinary state of affairs. The seconds looked at each other in perplexity, it was unprecedented that a man should refuse to give satisfaction in this manner. Finally, they decided to consult their principal.

They returned the next day and informed Mr. V—— that since he refused to fight, he must formally apologize. This, the harassed gentleman

consented to do and a most imposing looking document was drawn up, in which Mr. V—— expressed his regret in suitable and lengthy phrases and to which he affixed his signature.

This incident, which received the widest publicity, was discussed throughout Damascus and made an extremely bad impression. The German officers were perfectly justified in demanding and obtaining an apology from Mr. V—— for his impolite phrase, but such an incident, so damaging to German prestige, should never have arisen. A little tact, a little understanding of native sentiment and the matter could have been adjusted by Mr. V—— voluntarily resigning his membership. The way it was handled, gave the incident an undue importance.

There were several other instances of a like nature, whereby the Germans clearly showed that they regarded their task in Turkey as one, not to increase the efficiency of the Ottoman State for the benefit of the Turkish people, but to forge an instrument of military value for the benefit of the German Empire. Consequently, they were more given to trying to impress the Turks and their subject races with the greatness of Germany than they were in assimilating themselves to local conditions in order to cure Turkey of her decaying maladies. They were, in consequence, abnormally touchy concerning their national honour, yet insensible to the hurts which they inflicted on those whom they had been sent to instruct.

They were efficient and energetic in technical matters, but blind to all psychological considerations, which are of such extreme importance in dealing with an Oriental country. They thought in terms of strategy, but failed to note the weakness of the structure on which that strategy was built.

It must be remembered that, at this time, Germany was bent on developing an ambitious Middle-Eastern policy, of which the Baghdad Railway was to be an important adjunct. They regarded the construction of this railway as of first-class strategical importance, which indeed it was, or rather would have been, if it had been completed. Instead of urging on the Turks the necessity for pursuing a liberal policy towards the Arabs, through whose domains a great length of that railway would pass, they even overlooked the need for ensuring its safety, and far from any attempt being made to placate the Arabs, measures of greater severity were introduced in those territories lying between Baghdad and Basra. This, as will be shown, had important results later on.

Meantime, as the months went by, I began to be somewhat disturbed by a series of incidents of rather startling significance. In December 1913, Enver Pasha paid a visit of inspection to the Damascus garrison. During his visit, several Turkish officers, with whom I was on very friendly terms, informed me that a programme of intensive training was shortly to be commenced and which was to be completed by July 1914. I asked the reason for this haste and the choice of the month of July. They replied, rather vaguely, that Russia was unostentatiously increasing her effectives on the Armenian frontier and that Turkey had to prepare for any eventualities in that quarter. I made all the private inquiries I could, regarding this alleged concentration, but could get no confirmation regarding it.

From this time onwards, there came a succession of Germans to Syria, whose movements created

considerable comment. They gave out that they were business men, but the fact was they did no business. One of them, who was introduced to my wife in April 1914, made a most significant remark, which later he tried to cover up. He had stated that he was in a great hurry. When my wife asked him why he was so pressed, he said, "All German business men have to get back to Germany from this country by the middle of July." Then he rather confusedly corrected himself and said, "I mean, I have to." We would not have paid much attention to his remark, except for this hasty and embarrassed correction, and the date.

In December 1913, the Von der Goltz military mission was withdrawn and a new and larger mission was sent out under General Liman von Sanders.

Major von H—— left for an extended tour of India and the Far East, and told me he would return to Germany via the Siberian Railway. He was supplied with a document, which he showed me in a moment of pride, signed by the Emperor himself, which would enable him to board any German ship and obtain a passage, whether accommodation was available or not. It would *have* to be found. This was a most unusual document for an individual to have, unless he was on a special mission. When I asked him how long the voyage was to take, he replied, "Well, I have to be back in Germany by July!" More significant still, he told me he intended visiting several of the Indian princes, including the Nizam of Hyderabad. He asked me whether I would be good enough to give him letters of introduction to any high military officers I might know in India. This I did; at the same time I wrote out to the Indian Authorities and reported

what I had done, warning them that I considered that Major von H—— was travelling on an important mission and should be watched.

When he came to say good-bye, I said to him : “ Major von H——, I have given you, on my own responsibility, introductions to important people in India. So long as you confine your visit to ‘ sight-seeing,’ you will have a very good time, *but*——” and I emphasized the word——“ if you try to find out anything you are not meant to find out, it will not be pleasant.” He started back as if I had struck him and went deathly pale. Then he pulled himself together with an effort and said, “ That would not be kind of me, after your goodness.” I replied, “ It would not be wise,” and these were my parting words to this very efficient officer.

About this time, too, I met and became rather friendly with a Russian officer, travelling as a civilian, who told me he had been an official observer with the Serbian Army during the late Balkan War. He said to me one day, “ What are the Germans up to ? ” I asked him what he meant. “ They are preparing for something important which is to take place next summer,” he replied. I asked him how he had come to that conclusion. “ Well,” he said, “ I have been travelling about a good deal and in all the military centres I have visited, certain friends of mine have informed me that the German Mission is urging the Turks to complete important military preparations by the end of next summer.”

His information tallied so exactly with the scraps of news I had myself picked up, that I was extremely interested and begged him to tell me, in greater detail, what information he had collected and what his conclusions were regarding it. He was, however,

most reticent in his replies and shortly afterwards mysteriously left the country. Then suddenly it flashed across my mind what all these references to "July" meant, why I had been treated in the manner I have described, why Major von H—— tried to scare me away on the night of my arrival in Damascus. They were anxious lest I might stumble on the truth. Germany was preparing for war! So convinced was I, of the correctness of my conclusions, that I determined to rush home to England and report to Sir Edward Grey, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, all that I had heard. If I did this, I would risk overstaying my leave, for I was due back in India on May 10th, and it was now April 7th. I found that I just had time to get to England and, that if I left that country twelve hours later, by the Calais-Brindisi express, I could catch a Peninsular and Oriental boat which would get me back to India with one day to spare.

I therefore telegraphed home to my father-in-law, to arrange an appointment with Sir Edward. To my great disappointment, I learned on my arrival in England, that Sir Edward had gone over to Paris, two days previously, but worse still, I arrived after the Foreign Office was closed and my father-in-law had not taken the trouble to communicate with the Foreign Secretary, as he did not think that Sir Edward Grey would have consented to give an appointment to a "young fellow like yourself."

I had to leave early the next morning and my expensive rush home had been in vain! I got back to India in time and returned to my regiment in Meerut and from there I wrote privately to the Chief-of-the-Staff, informing him that, according to my information, Germany was preparing for war

in the beginning of August. I expected, of course, to get an immediate summons to go to Simla, but instead, I received the following reply to my letter : " If the Germans intend to go to war, as you suggest, it is very strange that they should talk about it in such an open manner." The writer went on to hope that I had had a pleasant holiday !

I shall never cease to blame myself that I did not overstay my leave when in England and report to the Foreign Office. But I was very young, twenty-five, and it was a very serious thing for a young officer to do, moreover, although I was myself convinced of the correctness of my deductions, the information was of so sensational a kind, that I had great fears as to whether I could convince others. The reply of the Chief-of-the-Staff in India to my communication and my failure to see Sir Edward Grey disheartened and discouraged me. I lost confidence and began to wonder whether I had not been making a fool of myself. It is but small satisfaction to me now to recall that I did actually communicate my fears to one in high authority and that those fears were justified.

The outbreak of the World War of course, destroyed all hopes of an Arab revolt as originally planned. The rising had been organized to commence in the spring of 1915. It had been intended to ask the British Government to lend its support, and if active support was refused, then it was hoped that the importation of arms and ammunition would not be interfered with.

So far as I know, the request was never actually made, for as I have said, the War prevented these carefully-laid plans from being put into execution, and when Turkey joined the Central Powers, the

mobilization of Turkish troops in Syria and Baghdad, together with the reinforcements sent to Basra, made any rising for the moment impossible. Moreover, all those known to hold extreme views were arrested and many put to death, others being pressed into military service. Of these latter, more will be related to show what manner of men they were.

It has frequently been argued that the Syrian is a talker, whose impassioned words are never translated into acts. The martyrdom of the Syrian patriots at the hands of the Turks when War broke out, disposes of this fallacy for all time, nay, sets up an imperishable monument to the indomitable courage of a people by nature peaceable. Almost without exception, they faced their accusers with pride and courage. They walked to the scaffold with their heads held high and loudly prayed for the deliverance and happiness of their country. They expressed their joy in dying in the name of freedom and exclaimed that they surrendered their lives in the firm belief that they were subscribing with their blood to the Charter of Syrian independence.

CHAPTER V

THE REJECTED ALLY

TURKEY entered the War in November, 1914. Two days later, Sir Percy Lake, Chief of the Staff, summoned me to Delhi. When I reached Army Headquarters, I was at once shown into Sir Percy's office and found him seated, together with General Waterfield, examining a large scale map of the Persian Gulf. They were working out the plans for the British Expeditionary Force, which was to land at the Shatt-al-Arab, the mouth of the Tigris.

"We have summoned you here," said Sir Percy, "in order to ask you to be good enough to give us all the information you can about the situation in Arabia." "And rather late in the day," I thought to myself. However, I gave all the information I had. I told him that the Arabs were, practically to a man, fiercely anti-Turk and were ready to revolt, and that if they were well organized and properly led, I considered that they would provide us with a powerful weapon, the use of which would have the most important results.

"And who is to lead them?" Sir Percy asked.

"Ibn Sa'ud," I answered readily.

"How many men has he got?"

"I cannot possibly say," I replied, "but I calculate the number of armed men he can put in the field at 10,000 and this I consider to be a conservative estimate."

"That is extremely important," said Sir Percy and he glanced towards General Waterfield, who nodded his assent.

"What is the attitude of the other Arab chiefs?" I was next asked.

"With the exception of Ibn Rashid of Hail and the Imam Yahya of the Yemen, the chiefs of Arabia are wholeheartedly in favour of fighting the Turk," I answered.

"Well," said Sir Percy, "go back to Meerut and send us in a report, giving us your recommendations regarding this matter; above all, give us your suggestions as to what should be the Arabs' immediate objectives, provided we decide to use them."

I left Delhi greatly heartened. I felt I could make out a good case for bringing the Arabs into the field and I was equally confident, that in view of the obvious advantages which would result from calling the Arabs to arms, that the Indian General Staff would accept my recommendations in principle and act upon them.

I tabulated the military material I considered necessary for which the Arabs should be provided to ensure success. This included rifles, machine-guns, mountain guns, with, of course, the necessary ammunition, and I emphasized the necessity for lending Ibn Sa'ud several British officers, who might act as his technical advisers. As to the objectives, I suggested that there should be but one, and that all efforts should be concentrated in attaining it: That objective was Damascus.

"Damascus," I wrote, "is a nerve-centre of the Turkish Army. Although it is protected by the Lebanon mountains on the north and west, it lies completely exposed on the south and east. It is,

then, extremely vulnerable to an Arab attack from the desert and if proper secrecy is maintained, there is every prospect that the city may be carried at a blow, by a surprise assault."

To my great grief and disappointment, I received a few days later, the following reply from General Lake :

" Delhi, 15th November, 1914.

" DEAR BRAY,

" Thanks for your memorandum. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to supply any of the requisites you suggest. Every rifle and gun is required in France and we can spare no British Officers.

" Yours sincerely,

" PERCY H. LAKE."

Fate undoubtedly bears a part in these affairs and thus it came about that, either through inability, or by short-sightedness, as I myself think, the scheme was refused. The result was that the Arab movement developed, eventually, into a half-hearted affair, disjointedly led by men incapable of giving it cohesion. Its true significance was lost sight of and its military potentialities wasted.

As a matter of fact, the Indian Government did send one British officer to Ibn Sa'ud and the story of what happened to him is worth recording.

This officer was Captain Shakespear of the Indian Army. At this time, Ibn Sa'ud was at loggerheads with the pro-Turk Ibn Rashid. Raids and counter raids were constantly taking place between them, for in addition to their political differences, there was a still more bitter family feud, which no political agreement could heal.

Ibn Sa'ud then sent an expedition, under his son Turki, to attack Ibn Rashid and capture Hail, the latter's capital. Turki encountered Ibn Rashid's cavalry unexpectedly on the desert, not far from that city. In the fight which ensued, Turki's forces were supported by a machine gun, placed on a slight eminence, in order that it might sweep the oncoming ranks of Ibn Rashid's mounted men. The gun opened with a heartening crackle and then suddenly was silent. It had jammed. Deprived unexpectedly of its aid and dismayed by the sudden silence of its noisy splutter, Turki's men broke and fled.

Shakespear, to stem the panic, rushed to the gun to bring it, by his expert knowledge, again into action and was left, deserted, on the mound with the silent gun, to face the charge alone.

Ibn Rashid's horsemen swept on, with muffled beat of horse hoofs, ever nearer and nearer, while Shakespear, with frantic but methodical haste, sought to remedy the defect, but before he could do so, he and his gun were smothered in the wrack and when the wave swept over them and beyond, Shakespear lay a huddled heap by his silent gun.

When, later on, I was in Bahrein I talked with one of Turki's bedouin, who was present at the action, and reproached him for their base desertion of Shakespear.

"We liked Shakkespir much," he answered, "and were sorry for his death, but, by Allah, the fault was not ours. He either did not know or else forgot the principal rule of our desert warfare."

"And what is this rule?" I asked.

"Whenever the Bedouin are caught at a disadvantage," he replied, "they naturally run away, not through fear, of course, but from common sense."

Why stay to be slain, when the sacrifice of your life would be useless? So it was here; we were caught unawares and fled, but Shakkespīr forgot the rule of the desert and so perished."

Some time elapsed before Shakespear was replaced in Ibn Sa'ud's capital, Riyadh, but we paid Ibn Sa'ud a monthly salary, which continued for some years after the War and close touch with him was maintained by correspondence. Nevertheless, Ibn Sa'ud remained neutral for the whole period of the War, for reasons which will be later explained.

As far as I was personally concerned, my connection with Arabian affairs was temporarily severed by my joining my regiment in France and I heard little of what was happening in Arabia for nearly two years, until, being at home on temporary leave in July 1916, my eye caught a small paragraph in the morning paper headed "Revolt of the Sherif of Mecca against the Turks." At last, it had come! Given men of vision who would realize the stupendous significance of this event, not only now during a time of war and stress, but later when peace should come, we would have an opportunity of playing a part in the re-creation of the Orient which no nation in the world's history had so far had the privilege of performing. If we gave an unselfish support to this movement and helped the Arabs to win their freedom, we would be acknowledged throughout the East as the champions of the new ideal, and be recognized as the guardians of that spiritual movement which was now stirring the minds of the Oriental peoples.

I determined to go to the Foreign Office and do all in my power to emphasize the importance of this movement, which would have such far-reaching results.

I was received at the Foreign Office with the greatest kindness by Mr. V——t.

He patiently heard me out, and when I apologized for the length of my appeal, he said: "Don't apologize, it is our business to listen to statements of this nature and to hear all that you have got to say. We are not bound up in red-tape here. I think, however, that you should in the first instance see Sir Mark Sykes."

I did not know Sir Mark Sykes, but Mr. V——t informed me that he was responsible for Arabian affairs. He then called up Sir Mark on the telephone and told me that I should go immediately to the latter's house at Buckingham Gate.

I found Sir Mark Sykes filled with the greatest enthusiasm for the movement. He was a man of imagination, too imaginative some said. He had great sympathy and understanding of the Orient. He had an immense capacity for work and, while not actually in the Government, had very considerable influence with the Cabinet. He therefore possessed all the requisite qualifications for being put in charge, as he was, of the arrangement for giving effect to the decisions of the Cabinet with regard to the revolt.

He was in uniform as an officer in the Yeomanry. His uniform did not fit him—his Sam-Browne belt was crooked—his hair was ruffled. He was, as a matter of fact, too volcanic for any clothes to fit him, his rapid movements would have jerked them out of place. He was possessed of a fine head, a mobile mouth and kindly, very intelligent eyes in which a smile always lurked. He was inclined to be stout, like many men whose muscles are exercised with laughter. At the War Office, they called him

"The Mad Mullah," for he would burst into a room, give his news on various weighty matters, demand certain action and rush out of the room in the same tempestuous manner in which he had entered it. Besides, he was regarded as a visionary. Would that we had more like him !

He said, "What have you got to say ?"

I started off by saying : "This Arab revolt is an historical event. It gives England an opportunity she will never have again."

"Quite right," he snapped.

I talked at length. I insisted that we should support it to the utmost of our capabilities. As it was very important to gain for the Sherif the support of Mohammedans outside Arabia, I suggested that, in order to counteract a vicious propaganda, we should at once send out a mission of Indian officers, carefully selected from the Indian regiments in France, to visit the Hedjaz, talk to the Sherif, and learn at first hand his motives for rebelling against his co-religionists. That they should then go to India and make an extended tour to explain the true meaning of the revolt to the Mohammedans of India. In this manner they would gain for the Arab cause the sympathy and support of our Mohammedan subjects.

All the time I was speaking, Sir Mark strode rapidly up and down the room, not saying a word and finally, as he made no comment, I paused to invite one.

His back was turned to me ; when I ceased, he whipped round.

"Come here," he said, indicating a writing table. "Sit down ! Write, write down everything which you have said," and he plumped down a sheaf of

foolscap paper before me with a bang. The suddenness of the order and the huge pile of paper set before me drove every thought out of my head, and my mind became an absolute blank. I stared, with unseeing eyes, at the white sheets in front of me.

"What is the matter?" he asked, "Go on—write."

"I can't write a word if you go on standing there," I replied in desperation. He laughed heartily and said:

"All right, I will leave you to it," saying which he abruptly left the room. He came in several times to ask whether I had finished; finally, when at last I had completed the task he had set me, he seized the sheets and gave them to his secretary in the next room to type.

"We must place before the Government every argument we have for giving the Arabs all possible assistance," he explained. He then put on his military cap, all crooked, seized a small attaché case, asked me to come along and dashed out of the house. He hailed a taxi and drove straight to the India Office. Here, he discussed the suggestion of sending out the Indian officers with Sir Arthur Hertzell, Under-Secretary of State, who seemed favourably impressed, and we then went off together to talk the matter over with General Sir Edmond Barrow, the Military Secretary. He likewise approved of the suggestion. We then walked like madmen to the War Office, where I was introduced to various officers of that section which dealt with Arabian affairs. Sir Mark rushed me from room to room. On one occasion, one of the officers wanted to know, quite justifiably, who I was and how I came into the affair, and to the latter part of the question Sir Mark replied: "Never mind, never mind, he is a pin on my

map." I pondered over this doubtful compliment. However, I was more pleased to be a pin on the Arabian map than a bodkin in France.

In a few days, the energetic Sir Mark had got all the authorities concerned in the matter to approve the scheme for sending the Indian deputation out to the Hedjaz.

Four Indian officers were brought over to England and I was instructed to complete my arrangements for conducting them to Jeddah. We were to break our journey in Cairo and report to Sir Henry Macmahon, High Commissioner in Egypt, to whom we were to explain the nature of our mission.

This visit of the Indian officers to the Hedjaz had an even deeper purpose than to inform Indian Mohammedans of the real state of affairs and elicit their sympathy.

Up-to-date, affairs in the Persian Gulf had been dealt with by the authorities in India and this arrangement still existed. All negotiations and dealings with Ibn Sa'ud and the Arab rulers, whose territories lay on the Indian Ocean or on the Gulf, were carried out by officers of the Indian Political Service, whose sphere extended to Kunfidah in the Red Sea. The important fortress of Aden was under the command of the Commander-in-Chief in India, and the patrol of the Red Sea carried out by ships of the Royal Indian Marine.

When the Sherif began his negotiations with the British Government, just previous to the revolt, he did so through British officials in Egypt. These officials, in their turn, dealt direct with the Foreign Office.

Consequently, when the revolt broke out, there was a sort of divided command between Egypt and

India. The interests of both administrations were conflicting. The British Government was swayed, first one way and then the other, as each put forward their recommendations regarding the policy which should be pursued and the military action which should be taken.

The Sherif, being in close touch with the more sympathetic British representatives of Egypt, was able to persuade them that he represented the whole Arab nation, which was far from being the case; and in Egypt, being closer to the Foreign Office than India, this view prevailed, to the detriment of the Arab cause, since the Foreign Office, as time went on, became too closely connected with King Hussein and his sons. It was only to be expected then, that the Government should view Arabian affairs from the narrow perspective of events in the Hedjaz. The Foreign Office, consequently, became obsessed with the idea that the Sherifian family were the real arbiters of Arabia. Treaties were concluded with King Hussein which were of a national, and even international character, but which were really valueless as national instruments, since the Arab signatories to them were by no means to be regarded as representative of the people of Arabia.

It was, therefore, with a view to assisting to bring the Indian and the Foreign Office points of view into harmony, that Sir Mark Sykes so readily accepted the proposal of sending this Indian Mission out to Jeddah.

Before setting out, however, there was an important arrangement to make. It is the traditional custom of Arabia to bestow presents when making visits to the chiefs, who return these tokens of esteem with gifts of equal value; so I asked the

India Office to supply suitable presents. They asked me my advice. I suggested a large silver tray, coffee pot, tea-pot and other accessories. They were somewhat disturbed at the cost, £400, but I insisted that the mission could not go empty-handed without losing prestige. Accordingly, accompanied by a large deal box containing this contribution to ceremony, we set forth on our pilgrimage.

On the way out to Egypt, I used the opportunity for making the Indian officers acquainted with Arabian affairs and its people. For the Mohammedan of India, Arabia is Mecca. The rest is a blank, and like the townsmen of Arabia itself, they regarded the Bedouin as a robber and a scamp. I had to disabuse them of these ideas. They were apt pupils, burning with a quiet enthusiasm to help their King, even in this, to them, strange manner; for they were warriors, bred from generations of soldiers and not diplomats, which was the rôle they had now to play. For them, the King was the personification of England; Mecca was the lodestar of their religion; His Majesty the King symbolized for them the Rāj they served. Mecca claimed their religious devotion. So, in a dual rôle of devotees and servants of their King, they were proud and happy.

In due course, escorted by Japanese destroyers, we safely crossed the Mediterranean to Egypt—for at this time the narrow sea was infested with submarines. On arrival in Cairo, we were introduced to Sir Henry Macmahon, High Commissioner in Egypt, and to the officers of the Arab Bureau, the organization which dealt directly with Arabian affairs. The "Bureau" contained a queer mixture of brilliant men—a professor, a lawyer, a newspaper

correspondent, a peer's son, a Sudan official, a soldier, a naval officer, and others, all very competent, very enthusiastic, and very loyal to the Sherif's cause, but handicapped by too close a view of the revolt. Too greatly influenced by the ebb and flow of its events, they mostly forgot the rest of Arabia.

I spent a week in Cairo in their very stimulating company, learning the latest news with regard to the Arab movement, and of all that had taken place on paper, and in the field. In spite of the fact that the paper effects were stupendous, while the results achieved in the field were a great deal less impressive, all seemed full of promise, and I was impatient to reach Jeddah and get into personal touch with actual events.

At last, on August 24th, we boarded the Royal Indian Marine ship, *Hardinge*, at Suez, for the last stage of our journey—and for me the curtain was about to rise on the stage of Arab endeavour.

CHAPTER VI

HUSSEIN IBN ALI, SHERIF OF MECCA

ALTHOUGH it was the hot season of the year, it being September 10th (reputed to be the worst month at Jeddah), the morning was cool and fresh. A north wind was blowing when we first sighted the town—an indistinct grey mass, sticking up above the plain like a low, blunt pyramid, for the houses increased in height towards the centre, from the surrounding walls. The approach is guarded by two coral reefs which provide an outer and an inner anchorage, and the channels between are narrow and tortuous. The water is shallow and changes in tones as the depth decreases till, close to the waterfront, it shines a bright metallic green, which is reflected upon the nearer houses. It did not take us long to transfer ourselves and our baggage on to the launch sent to take us on shore, and soon we were speeding towards the landing steps.

Whenever I think back on Jeddah, I smell gunny-bags ; for the quay was piled high with bags of rice, sugar, and other commodities, which were damp from the hot, moist atmosphere. I can still feel the sensation of walking on the earth of the narrow streets, earth beaten down by the bare feet of countless generations of pilgrims, so that it had the resiliency and silence of india-rubber from which our footsteps gave back no echo.

The grey appearance of the town seen from the sea is confirmed on closer inspection. The houses, many of which tower up to five storeys, are built of coralline rock, a grey, porous stone, very rough, which collects in its crannies the sand borne by the winds. The windows, which are plentiful and large, are surrounded by ornate frames, beautifully carved in teak brought from Java, a great deal of it centuries ago, and every storey has its balconies of fretted woodwork; but bleached grey by the fierce Arabian sun. Everything is crooked; the walls of the houses lean over at queer angles, the balconies sag dangerously, and even the minarets of the Mosques rival the inclination of the tower of Pisa. The houses are packed close together within the walls, with no regard to method, so that the streets are narrow and confusing.

Though there are discomforts to be borne in plenty and a climate, which at times tears the vitals out of you, yet Jeddah has a fascination and a charm of its own. It is so essentially Oriental, its colourings so soft and harmonious, its voice so hushed and mysterious.

The reflection of the sun off the walls of the water gate, where we landed, was painful to the eyes, and stabbed through the narrowed pupils to the brain behind, so that it was a pleasant relief to enter the narrow covered streets of the market. Here, by contrast, the gloom was profound and the figures of the merchants sitting in their cave-like shops were indistinct and hardly seen. At intervals, where the roof was broken, or expressly left open, the sun shone through, a blinding white streak, like limelight thrown upon a stage and, in its brilliance, a cloud of flies and dust particles danced with bewildering rapidity.



A TYPICAL HOUSE IN JEDDAH SHOWING THE
BEAUTIFULLY CARVED WOODWORK.

As we passed, the heads of the merchants and shopkeepers rose sharply and their eyes fixed themselves upon us in a stolid stare. This happened in sequence as we passed each booth, and, with such regularity, that I was reminded of a line of soldiers numbering from the right. The silence was uncanny, so that the mere pitter-patter of a passing donkey, and the dull thud of its owner's stick upon its rump, would awaken the mind, lulled to numbness, with something of a shock.

When we entered the Consulate, we seemed suddenly transported back to our own world. The bustle, the click of typewriters, the sound of boots upon stone floors, gave us back the nationality we had seemingly lost upon our way thither. Colonel Wilson, the British representative, a dapper, soldierly little figure, gave us hearty welcome. He looked tired, like a man grappling ceaselessly with insoluble problems. Indeed, he had a thankless task, which was performed with unfailing good humour.

Most of his time was, at this period, taken up with lengthy arguments, on paper and by telephone, with the Sherif, regarding the extent of the new Arab kingdom. The misunderstanding which ensued still persists and only the passage of time can heal the breach which was made in the, till then, solid wall of Anglo-Arab friendship.

The obstacles which were placed in our way in helping the Arabs were unbelievable. The Sherif wished to decide every question which arose, whether with regard to policy or military action. He trusted no one, not even his own sons, of whom he was as suspicious as of all with whom he had to deal. Every petty detail of supply, finance or administration

was dealt with by him personally. He reached no decision till after long argument and then gave his consent grudgingly, and frequently revoked it a few hours later. He daily became more and more imbued with the idea that he was the arbiter of Islam and the generalissimo of the forces in the field. I was sometimes amazed at Wilson's patience and forbearance.

These facts, however, only became clear to me as I got fuller knowledge of Wilson's work, but I had learnt enough during the first few hours to be heartily glad that I was not in his shoes.

The afternoon of our arrival was spent in making preparations for the Mission's departure for Mecca and in giving Gulmawaz, the Risaldar-Major of my own Regiment, and head of the Delegation, his final instructions. He was like a great schoolboy on a holiday. He saw humour in everything, even in the prospect of a sixty kilometre ride to Mecca on a mule or camel. But, for all his boyishness, he had a keen brain, a retentive memory, and a shrewd observance, and was admirably suited for the task for which he had been selected.

The next day, he, Hassan Shah, of the 9th Hodson's Horse, and their companions, set off to Mecca to perform their religious and diplomatic duties. Conspicuous among their baggage was the deal box which contained their gifts to the King. I hoped that when they returned, they would bring back with them such tokens of the King's generosity as would enable them to advertise, on their return to India, the liberal bounty of the man upon whom the eyes of the whole Moslem world were fixed. He was an unknown quantity. In the opinion of many he had done a terrible thing in turning his sword

against the Caliph. A worse thing, by unsheathing that sword in the Holy City itself. But judgment was suspended for the moment and, in the East, it is often small, apparently insignificant things which appeal to the imagination and bend men's minds to love or hate. Nothing has a greater appeal to the Oriental than open-handedness, nothing is so repulsive to them as niggardliness—opposite qualities which are regarded as the mirror of a ruler's character.

I had conveyed a hint to the King through this glittering silverware—was his intelligence keen enough to grasp its significance? Was his mind broad enough to respond?

I hoped, too, that Gulmawaz would bring back comforting news regarding the treatment of the pilgrims and the arrangements made for their comfort, for before long, these would be scattered throughout the Moslem world. What would they have to tell of the new champion of Arab freedom?

Gulmawaz mounted a mule; his huge bulk of fourteen stone made the beast's back bend as he lowered himself into the saddle. His hearty, honest laugh broke out as he contrasted his present mount with his fine chestnut charger in France. The Risaldar-Major of a crack cavalry regiment upon a mule! Well, it was in the King's service, and he dug his heels into the mule's stomach and trotted off, the dust rising in spurts behind the hoofs of his strange steed.

As I now had some long period in which to await the Mission's return, Colonel Wilson asked me to assist him as Intelligence Officer, and this I was most ready to do, and set about my duties forthwith.

It was interesting work, for it gave me an insight into the wider aspects of the revolt and showed me

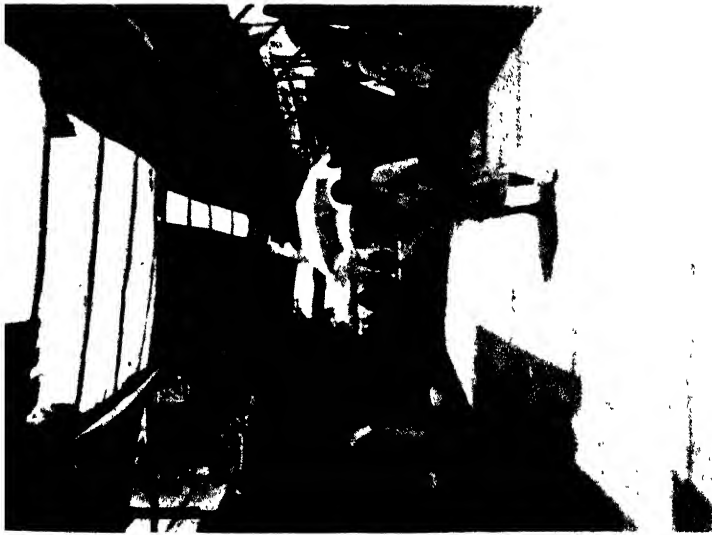
what a great service it had done the Allied cause by nipping in the bud a vast Pan-Islamic conspiracy engineered by Enver Pasha with German connivance. Enver's plan was an ambitious one. In theory magnificent ; in practice, fantastic, as were so many of the plots hatched by Enver Pasha and his C.U.P.¹ satellites. Yet, there were sufficient factors in it to make it dangerous. The plot was discovered by the almost accidental arrest of a youth who was attempting to cross the North-West frontier of India from Afghanistan. The account he gave of himself was highly unsatisfactory and he was carefully searched. Sewn into his clothing, on bits of linen, was found sufficient information to give away to the Authorities the main features of the plot and to blow it sky high.

He was found to be the emissary of a certain Barakat Ullah, an Indian renegade and schemer who had taken refuge in Afghanistan, who, working in Kabul in C.U.P. interests, was an important member of the conspiracy and was communicating, through the medium of this callow youth, with those connected with the scheme in India.

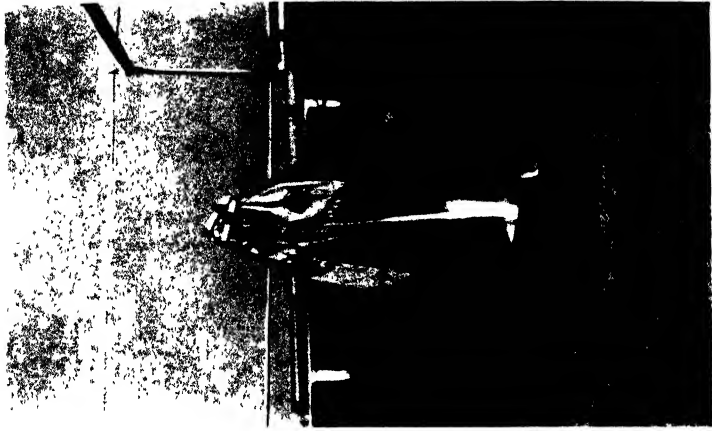
Briefly, the object of the plot was to raise a "Jehad" or Holy War against England, throughout the Middle East. Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan, and India, were divided into districts ; each district was commanded by a "General" or a "Colonel," who was responsible for raising the "Army," which, when all was ready, was to rise and set the Middle East, and particularly India, in a blaze of revolt.

This plot was hatched in Medina, where another Indian, a religious teacher, Maulvi Mahmoud Hassan by name, who had great influence among the Moham-

¹ Committee of Union and Progress.



A STREET IN JEDDAH. IN THE FOREGROUND
A TYPICAL PILGRIM CLOTHED IN THE SIMPLE
CEREMONIAL GARB.



OWDI IBN ZUWEID—THE SEA PIRATE
WHO INTERCEPTED AND DISPOSED OF
THE STOTZINGEN MISSION.

medans of India, was persuaded, without great difficulty, to accept a leading rôle. He had visited Mecca, ostensibly for the performance of the pilgrimage, and it was intended that he should return to India with the pilgrims and there act in co-operation with Barakat Ullah. The Jihad was, of course, to be blazoned forth from Mecca, the religious centre of the Mohammedan world and was to have the appearance of a spontaneous outbreak of religious fanaticism, engendered by the shock caused to Mohammedan feelings at England being at war with Turkey and the Caliph of Islam.

In two days the Sherif's revolt had smashed the plan to smithereens, since a Jihad could hardly be preached with the religious head of Mecca in open revolt against the Turks; but out of the débris, the latter were still determined to use some of the fragments which had formed part of the original whole. This was to cause discontent and even mutiny among the men of the Indian Army.

Maulvi Mahmoud Hassan was to carry on with this "good deed" on his return to India. In particular, he was to vilify the Sherif and discredit him in the eyes of the Indian Mohammedans.

Mahmoud Hassan, when I took over the duties of Intelligence Officer, was at Mecca. I found he was still in communication with Fakri Pasha, the Turkish Commander in Medina, and was surreptitiously trying to stir up local feeling in Mecca against the Sherif.

Colonel Wilson therefore telephoned the Sherif and requested him to arrest Mahmoud Hassan and send him down to Jeddah under escort. At first the Sherif demurred as he nearly always did when asked to do something helpful, saying that it was inadvisable "to treat so saintly a man in such rough

fashion." When it was explained to him, however, that this "saintly" individual was plotting against the Sherif himself (whose throat he was advocating should be slit), he hastily agreed as to the advisability of immediately ejecting him from Mecca.

Mahmoud Hassan arrived in Jeddah within twenty-four hours, and was brought before me for examination. I was keenly interested to meet this arch-plotter and expected to see a swashbuckler with venomous eyes and of insolent bearing. Instead, an old man of benevolent aspect, with a flowing, snow-white beard and kindly eyes, was ushered into my presence.

It was hard to realize that this venerable, saintly-looking individual was one of the most dangerous men in India. I could hardly believe that he had been concocting plans to have officers murdered in their beds and women and children butchered in cold blood, and that he had been inciting his co-religionists to perform these acts in the name of religion. He was accompanied by a disciple, a man of about thirty, and if his master's appearance belied his character, his disciple filled the rôle of conspirator to perfection. His furtive eyes were kept lowered, but when he thought I was not regarding him, he flashed a look of bitter hatred at me. His whole appearance was snakelike, his very actions repulsive and, without uttering a word, he had the means of conveying an insult which made me itch to strike him.

"What have you been doing in Mecca?" I asked Mahmoud in Hindustani.

"That which my religion commands me," he replied.

"And does that religion command you to plot

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against your King and stir up rebellion in his dominions ? ” I asked him sternly.

“ Who says that I have been plotting against my King ? ” he asked, as one might ask a question of a child.

“ I do,” I snapped.

“ How so ? ” he asked.

“ On such and such a date in August, you attended at the house of So-and-So, at nine o’clock at night ; you preached sedition,” and I quoted much of what he had said on that occasion, for we were well informed. “ Do you deny it ? ” I asked. Whereupon, he rose quietly, and going to the corner of the room, commenced to pray. I regarded him with astonishment, but I was not so foolish as to fall into the trap of “ insulting ” his religion by forcing him to desist.

After I had been waiting patiently for some time, he rose from his knees and once more came and sat down before me. I repeated my last question. “ Deny what ? ” he asked. I repeated the whole accusation.

“ Who has informed you that I did this ? ” That was not so clever.

“ One who knows his duty to the British Raj,” I replied, whereupon he got up once more to say his prayers, or, perhaps to call down curses upon the unknown informant. It was a ridiculous situation, and I confess I did not know how to meet it. What could be done with a man, who every time you asked him an awkward question, went into the corner and said his prayers ? However, it was not reasonable to expect him to betray himself, so I closed the interview and Wilson telegraphed to the Government of India for instructions, as a result of which, the pair of them

were sent to the internment camp at Malta, where, behind barbed wire, they could indulge in their devotions uninterruptedly. After the War, he was released and allowed to return to India. And we are accused of being a brutal race ! Would others have shown such magnanimity ? Or was it policy not to add one more martyr to the Moslem calendar ?

As a result of the inquiry made regarding Mahmoud Hassan's activities it became abundantly clear that there was a definite campaign, now fairly launched, to discredit the Sherif both in Mecca and in India and it was serious enough for me to advise Colonel Wilson to ask the Sherif to come to Jeddah to discuss the matter. I hoped that he might persuade him to take a less arrogant attitude towards Indian opinion, to be more liberal towards his own subjects in Mecca, to get him to realize the importance of trying to win the sympathy and support of the Moslems of India, and to send through Gulmawaz an official declaration defining his policy and showing a statesmanlike regard for the feelings of an important section of the Moslem world. The Sherif was daily alienating sympathy for himself by his total disregard of Moslem feeling. I hoped that by drawing his attention to the plot in Mecca and the campaign in India, and playing on his fears, and appealing to his pride, to get him to take a broader view of his responsibilities. He considered Wilson's message important enough to warrant his arriving that same day at Jeddah. He appointed a time for us to see him at midnight, probably because he wished to keep his interview secret.

At a quarter-to twelve, that night, we set forth from the British Consulate for the Sherif's palace.

We were escorted by one of his armed Habisha and one of the Consulate servants carrying a lantern.

The streets were empty and a dead silence reigned over the whole town ; we made practically no sound as we trod the deserted alleys. The lantern bearer walked just in front of us ; in front of him, our armed guard and in front of him, a giant shadow thrown by the lantern's light and which danced, now on the road, now on the walls of the houses we passed. Its antics added to the strangeness of our progress.

When we reached the palace, it was apparently in darkness. Our guide, having taken us upstairs into a huge, unlighted room, pointed to the far end, where was an open doorway, through which shone the light of an illuminated room beyond. He then abruptly left us. We made our way gently to the room he had indicated, expecting that our guide had gone to inform the Sherif of our presence. To our surprise, when we reached the threshold of the lighted room, we found ourselves facing another long and high chamber. To one side was placed a sort of cushioned bench, and at right angles to its ends, two long rows of chairs were placed parallel, facing inwards, and the width of the bench apart. They were unoccupied, and their emptiness seemed shared by the remainder of the chamber ; but presently we saw, pacing backwards and forwards, with short, agitated steps, his hands clasped before him, his head bent, his brow furrowed, an old man, in simple Arab dress. He was so occupied with his anxious thoughts that he failed to note our presence. He looked like a caged animal, as he paced back and forth. It was the Sherif, and he was quite alone. We remained in the doorway, motionless, embarrassed. I felt a great pity surge through me. I felt

shame, too; we were seeing what we were not meant to see, for we saw him naked, as it were, his soul laid bare, a frail, frightened old man; not the Sherif of Mecca, but just a poor old man.

Suddenly, he seemed to sense our presence. He looked up sharply and, in a flash, his whole manner changed. He was still an old man, but a dignified one, a fine old aristocrat, the Sherif of Mecca, perhaps the future Caliph. I admired the quick presence of mind which enabled him to sweep away his anxieties, but I shall always remember him as I first saw him.

He bade us enter and conducted us to the bench, where we sat one on either side of him. The light from a single smoky oil-lamp shone down upon us, but the rest of the vast room was in darkness and our voices sounded strange in this huge emptiness.

We explained, at length, the nature of the Meccan plot, the propaganda in India and the need for him to combat both by proving himself, not only a leader of the Arabs of the Hedjaz, but the leading representative of Islam.

His reply was brief, but by his words he foreshadowed his own tragic failure.

"As to the plot against me in Mecca, that I am capable of dealing with, as to the Indians, I spit upon them," and he turned his head sideways and made the motion of spitting with his tongue and lips.

It was appalling, awful. I was filled with the most bitter disappointment. I could find no words to say and, indeed, words would have been useless, so we rose and took our leave.

We went back as we had come; the giant shadow dancing before us, a mocking, jeering phantom, as false as were the hopes of the gallant nation, who

looked to Hussein Ibn Ali, Grand Sherif of Mecca, descendant of the Prophet, to lead them to freedom.

The following day, we received disquieting news from Rabegh, a small village with a natural harbour, on the pilgrim road between Medina and Mecca. Feisal had had a severe repulse before Medina, and the road to Rabegh, where the Sherif Ali, Feisal's brother, protected his base with 8,000 men, was threatened. The Turks, if they were bold enough, could rush down to Rabegh and open the road to Mecca.

So Wilson decided that he should proceed as soon as possible to render Ali what aid he could. The Royal Indian Marine ship, *Hardinge*, a unit of the Red Sea patrol, was summoned by wireless. Aeroplanes and machine guns, ammunition and stores were urgently demanded from Egypt. Wilson offered to take me with him, and I was delighted at the prospect, if only my mission returned from Mecca in time to allow me to take advantage of his invitation. The Mission was due back in two days, the *Hardinge* was expected in three, so there was just a chance that I would get the opportunity I longed for.

To my surprise and relief, Gulmawaz and Hassan Shah returned the next evening and were pleasantly surprised when I told them that we would all go up to Rabegh in two days' time.

Gulmawaz, Hassan Shah, and myself closeted ourselves in a secluded room to prepare the report on the Mission's visit, for submission to the Government.

With regard to the evidence they had seen of the Turkish sacrilegious bombardment of the Kaaba and in justification of the Sherif's rebellion against the Turks, their report was highly satisfactory. They had collected sufficient first-hand evidence of

convince their co-religionists in India of the true state of affairs. Regarding the Sherif himself and his attitude towards Indian Moslems, their impression was unfortunate, but they were willing and anxious to make every allowance and excuse for one burdened with new responsibilities and anxieties, and, in spite of the fact that the Sherif treated them with hardly concealed dislike, they were drawn to him, as indeed all were. The report having been drafted, I turned to more personal matters.

"And how did the Sherif receive your gifts?" I asked Gulmawaz.

"He accepted them graciously," he answered cautiously.

"And what did he give you in return?" I asked eagerly, for I was anxious to know in what manner the Sherif would advertise his generosity.

Gulmawaz fumbled in the pocket of his kurta¹ and drew forth a crumpled strip of black cloth, a sorry, frayed rag, which looked as if it had been hacked from its parent garment with some blunt instrument.

"This!" said he.

I gazed at it in bewilderment. Gulmawaz, noting my surprised astonishment, laughed heartily.

"It is a sacred relic, a portion of the kiswa² and I am very glad to have it," he explained. I congratulated him.

"But what else?" I asked, for this could hardly be considered as a return present.

"There was no need for any other gift," Gulmawaz answered gravely.

¹ The uniform coat, worn by officers of the Indian Cavalry.

² The Kiswa is a black covering with a broad band of gold lettering, embroidered yearly in Cairo, and which is sent, at the commencement of each pilgrimage, to cover the Kaaba. After the ceremonies are over, the old one is cut into pieces and distributed among the pilgrims.

Well, as a holy relic, it was, no doubt, something to be prized, but as a return gift from a prince, it was as frayed as the donor's liberality, so I did not pursue the subject.

The *Hardinge* was so delayed that two days passed before she was signalled, so we had ample time to make our preparations. When we boarded her, we found Jaafer Pasha, formerly general officer Commanding the Turkish forces in Tripoli, and our one-time prisoner of war, on board. He was destined to become a tower of strength to the Arab cause. In addition there were Nuri Said, a young and brilliant soldier of the younger Turkish Military School, Captain Ross of the R.A.F., Colonel Jacob, an officer of considerable Arabian experience, and other officers, Arab and British, being sent to Rabegh to lend their aid.

I was glad to leave Jeddah, where everything seemed unreal, hampered, and get to those who were acting—to get away from paper to deeds.

CHAPTER VII

R A B E G H

THE following day we made our way slowly towards the narrow gap in the outer coral reef, which guarded the "Sherm" of Rabegh. All round us lay an opaque, milky haze, while the sea, deep blue and clear when looked at over the ship's side, stretched away to the horizon like polished metal, save where, a mile to starboard, a dark stain showed where its glittering surface was ruffled by a truant puff of wind.

Astern, our smoke hung motionless, a horizontal smear of amber, a mile-long smudge across the canvas of the sky.

The air, which hung upon the water, was hot and heavy and pressed upon our lungs, increasing, with its steamy dampness, the sweaty drops of our bodies.

Four of us stood on deck discussing the revolt, Nuri, Gulmawaz, Ross, and myself. Our conversation was carried on in four languages, Arabic, French, Hindustani, and English. Our discussion, therefore, was laboured and by the time a remark of Nuri's had been translated into Hindustani for the benefit of Gulmawaz, the sequence of our thoughts was disarranged and the observation which followed appeared irrelevant.

Yet, in our different ways, we were trying to voice our common enthusiasm for this revolt. Nuri

clearly expressed his hope of the re-birth of the Arab nation ; he gazed far into the future and saw his country once more established among the nations of the world. Gulmawaz, the simple, honest Indian soldier, hoped that the Arabs would deal with the Turks as they deserved, and desired the sweeping away of those abuses which made the pilgrimage a curse instead of a blessing to his co-religionists, to whom he was soon to carry a message of comfort for the future. And I ? I dreamed a dream, where England stood forth a champion of a new Orient. The days of conquest gone, but England endowed with a new and more glorious mission, a defender, a guide and a friend to those nations being re-born in the womb of the East.

Although our fancies painted different landscapes, we were united in our common desire to bear a hand in this great revolt. We were impatient to land and see the Arabs in the field and to become a part of their Crusade ; at least, to convey to them, by our presence, the fact that they were not unsupported, nor would be in the hour of danger.

Our feelings were shared by every officer and man of the *Hardinge*, and not only of the *Hardinge*, but of every other ship in the Red Sea patrol.

So far, we had only heard, at second or third hand, of the sort of men the tribesmen and their leaders were. The deeds they had performed in Mecca promised well for the future, and we were impatient to meet our friends and play our part.

The shrill piping of the bosun's whistle, signalling the " stand by " brought our conversation to an end. We were just passing the narrow entrance of the " Sherm " and in a few minutes, our anchors dropped into the clear waters of this natural harbour. Now,

at our leisure, we studied the country before us. To the north, six miles distant, a dark belt of palm-trees showed indistinctly through the haze; these, we were informed by one of the Sherif Ali's men who had accompanied us, concealed the Arab position. Midway between these palms and the ship, a coral bluff, some fifteen feet in height, bounded a small table-land, about three acres in area; this was the only natural feature to break the monotony of the swampy stretch of ground which filled the remainder of our view. The country looked lonely, unfriendly and desolate, and this feeling was increased by a small building on the water's edge which, we were informed, was the one-time Turkish customs house. Now it was deserted and its lonely aspect added to the dreariness of the scene.

The time was noon, the temperature unpleasant, yet we had half expected to see a group of Arabs on the shore, to denote some form of welcome; but our roving eyes could chance upon no human form.

Somehow, this lack of courtesy depressed us. It conveyed to our minds an impression of being unwelcome, an impression which later proved to be the actual fact, for while the Arabs accorded a warm reception for the money, arms and stores we brought them, they showed very little enthusiasm for our persons.

We were not long in finding out the cause. An evil propaganda was abroad. Where it originated it is difficult to say; whether it was started by Turkish agents, or was the seed of local fanaticism, did not greatly matter; but on one hand, it was contended that the district round Rabegh was holy ground, and we were informed that to set foot there would shock Moslem sentiment. On the other hand,

a rumour had been spread among Ali's following that we had come to occupy the country under the pretence of helping the Arab revolt.

That this was firmly believed by the ordinary Bedouin, I myself had occasion to remark a few days after our arrival.

Meanwhile, there being no signs of any messenger from Sherif Ali, Wilson sent Nuri and Ali's men on shore to convey his greetings and ask for an interview to discuss the situation and learn his needs.

After considerable delay, just as dusk was falling, a messenger arrived with a communication from Ali, to say that he would receive us the next morning at 9 a.m. and with this we had, for the moment, to rest content.

It was, of course, essential that we should do more than pay a ceremonial visit. We must examine the whole position, military and political. We must know exactly what resistance Ali could oppose to the Turk. Our information on this latter point was by no means reassuring. If we were to support the Arabs by gun-fire from our ships, as seemed essential, we must have some sort of a map, so that our shells would slay Turks, not Arabs.

In view of the political situation, Wilson was not likely to have an easy task the following day, but luckily, he had the tact and sympathy the occasion demanded. At eight the next morning we saw that the camels which would convey us to Ali's headquarters had arrived. In addition to these, an escort of about twenty men was provided. The reason for this precaution puzzled us till we were informed that the local inhabitants were fanatical and hostile, and regarded our landing with repugnance.

Colonel Wilson, Colonel Jacob and I were rowed ashore, and mounting our camels, set forth to keep our appointment, the escort closing us round, as if in fear of an imminent attack.

Of this I could see no signs. On the contrary, the few inhabitants we passed gave us friendly greeting, and if there was any sign of unfriendliness, it was confined to the scowling looks of our guard.

The Sherif Ali had his headquarters in a house in the village, which lay concealed in the palm-groves. Shortly before we reached their cool shade, we passed the main Arab encampment, a mass of tents, pitched in abandoned disorder, on a large square of level ground, flanked on one side by the newly-deserted Turkish fort.

No notice was taken of our progress and, except for an occasional shot, fired apparently in an exuberance of spirits, the camp was quiet, and few of the Bedouin were visible.

Passing through a corner of the camp, we entered the palm-grove and, skirting a dry wadi, were conducted to a white two-storeyed house, and having dismounted, were led up a narrow flight of stone stairs into a long, narrow room, its floor covered with handsome rugs. Round a window recess at the far end, was a cushioned divan, before which were ranged a few chairs, presumably placed there for our benefit. As we entered the room, Sherif Ali rose from the cushioned divan and hastened towards us, his face lit with a charming smile and his whole manner gracious and courteous, his voice, as he greeted us, soft and melodious.

He led Colonel Wilson by the hand and gently forced him to seat himself beside him, while Jacob and I occupied the vacant chairs.

I regarded the Sherif with keen interest. He was one of the leaders ; was he *the* leader ? The revolt required a man of fire, a living brand, capable of kindling an unquenchable spirit of enthusiasm in the souls of the Arab people. Instead, I saw before me, a slight, frail figure, his face tired and drawn. Every now and again he would lay his right hand on the hilt of his gold dagger with a curious, jerky movement, which betrayed the nervous strain through which he was passing. His voice was soft and caressing, apologetic, as he excused the tardiness of his welcome. He was obviously a sick man, and one not in a fit state to grapple with the tricky problems which confused the situation. He provided me with my second disappointment, his father being the first.

Here was no leader capable of pointing the way to freedom. Here was but a frail courtier, whose mind was being rudely buffeted by the fierce winds of factious spirits. Was this a time to quibble at the landing of a few Britishers, when the future of the Arab peoples trembled in the balance ? His mind was too well schooled to believe the stupid lies of the propagandist, or be influenced by the fierce invective of the fanatic. What were they doing, babbling of these things, when every man should have been steeling himself to sweep the Turk from the field ? Ali had not the force of character, or physical strength, to convert the feeble mob under his command, which was styled an army, into a weapon to inflict hurt upon the Turk.

After the usual compliments had been exchanged, Colonel Wilson made inquiries regarding the situation. Ali's reply was far from reassuring. Feisal to the north, having no artillery worth the name,

was incapable of holding the Turks, who were commanded by that doughty warrior, Fakri Pasha, in Medina; and the Turks were creeping forward day by day, cautiously feeling their way. At any moment they might venture on a rush, which would carry them to Rabegh, and Rabegh was the only obstacle between them and Mecca.

Wilson then asked permission to send his officers to examine the ground and see what was necessary for the defence, promising to provide everything his means permitted. Ali was non-committal and put the matter off for further consideration, so we took our departure.

Matters remained in this unsatisfactory state for some time. Every day we heard of a fresh Turkish advance to the southward. News kept coming in of a new Turkish post being established, one mile, two miles nearer Rabegh. Uncertain of our strength, they were, happily, advancing with extreme caution. This super-caution on the Turk's part really lost them their chance of suppressing the revolt. Did they but know it, they could have advanced on Mecca with but little serious opposition to stay their progress. They over-rated the strength of the opposition, while exaggerated reports of British Naval strength at Rabegh was the final deterrent to bolder action. The initiative, however, lay with the Turks, and as long as this condition remained, the situation at Rabegh continued to cause us on the spot, and the British Government at home, grave anxieties.

Meanwhile, Ali and his advisers remained inert in face of the dangers which threatened. The numbers of his "army," supposed to total 8,000 men, rose and fell according to the whims of those composing

it; the calls of their wives in their villages; the cash available to satisfy their needs. We brought a fresh supply with us—all gold—consequently, in two days the army was almost at full strength. But no steps whatsoever were taken to put the position in a fit state of defence. Finally, Colonel Wilson determined that we should take action and insist on taking control of the situation. He therefore demanded, and finally obtained permission, to land tents, stores and aeroplanes and prepare a defensive position close to the ships, which would, at least, ensure the retention of the harbour as a base. The Arabs were, owing to their obstinacy, to fight as best they could or as hard as they would and, in spite of their protests, it was determined to assist them by the guns from the ships and by armoured cars. In order to do this, a map was necessary, so I was deputed to visit Ali and insist upon my receiving permission to map the country.

In order not to run the risk of a refusal of an interview, I rode without warning to Ali's headquarters and asked to see him. I found him holding a sort of council and looking very worried. There appeared to have been some very heated discussion going on, which my entry had interrupted.

As always, however, Ali received me with his usual courtesy. I explained the reason of my visit and the necessity for compliance with my request.

Of course, all the others heard what he was saying, and at once a fierce argument broke out, the majority loudly protesting against the necessity for the request being granted. Ali tried to quiet them, but his hand raised in protest only seemed to provoke them to more heated opposition. Suddenly, goaded to distraction and shouting out something whose meaning

it was difficult to understand, he sprang to his feet and snatching his dagger from its sheath, raised it with the apparent intention of plunging it into his heart. Someone standing by hastily seized his wrist and prevented the stroke being delivered. This dramatic act quickly quelled the tumult and poor Ali sat down, looking very shaken. The request was granted, however, but Ali, on account, he said, of the hostility of the local inhabitants, insisted that I should work with an escort of fifteen men. As it was a matter of total indifference to me whether I was escorted or not, provided the escort did not get in my way, I agreed to this condition and it was arranged that I should start work the next day.

The following day then, carrying a tripod and the necessary instruments, I set forth on my work. All went well till, rounding the palm groves, I began to map the northern side. Here there were several small hamlets scattered over the plain. Suddenly, men came running excitedly out of the huts, carrying their rifles and spread themselves among the tufts of grass and hummocks.

I was naturally surprised, since I did not believe for a moment that a single man carrying a board was sufficient to cause alarm and bring this crowd out of their huts, like angry bees out of a hive.

I looked round to see the cause and there was my precious escort, some little distance in my rear, spread out on their camels in an extended line, advancing at a trot, brandishing their rifles. As I had everywhere been regarded with friendliness, they considered that it was time they proved how hostile the local inhabitants were and so they were deliberately provoking the villagers to hostilities.



THE FIRST EXAMPLE OF MAP-MAKING ON A LARGE SCALE FROM THE AIR.
(See page 100.)



Waving my tripod, I rushed towards them, bellowing abuse, whereupon, seeing the game was up, they gave up their foolish antics and collected together in a bunch, looking very foolish. When I reached the villagers, I found them extremely friendly and in ten minutes they gave me more information regarding the country than our so-called Allies had provided in a week.

The next day I again set forth, this time making for the opposite extremity of the palm grove. As we approached it, I saw a local Arab tending a small patch of cultivation, whereupon I made in his direction, intending to ask him questions regarding water. At once, the leader of my escort brought his camel round on the right side of my own camel, thus intervening between me and my objective, and proceeded to push me away. I therefore halted my camel, and passing behind him, again proceeded towards the cultivator at a trot. Once more my officious guide ranged alongside and his camel, being the heavier, or he the more expert rider, he pressed me off my line. Once more then, I halted and dismounting, proceeded on foot, seeing which, my tormentor trotted up to the cultivator and began to abuse him and ordered him away. He was, however, made of stout metal ; stooping down, he fumbled among the green shoots of his crop and produced a hefty club, which he brandished in a powerful fist, threatening the mounted Arab with the greatest determination. I reached the spot at this moment and, stepping between them, sternly ordered the mounted man to remove himself and his escort away out of my sight. He began to mumble something about the Sherif Ali's orders. I replied that I would myself see the Sherif and ask him to give

him a good beating. He then went off with the so-called escort and left me alone.

The cultivator grinned delightedly, and accepting the cigarette I offered him, we squatted down together and exchanged information.

There could be no clearer proof that all the talk about "holy ground" and "local hostility" was deliberately engineered, and had no foundation in fact. It had its origin in the propaganda spread, and difficult to deal with, that if once we landed, we would remain. I cannot imagine anyone but a lunatic wishing to stay in that inhospitable bit of country, but that is beside the point. The belief that we had designs on the Hedjaz was widespread and, I think, sincerely credited.

One day, I was marching along alone with my tripod, for happily I was no longer troubled with an escort, when I was joined by one of Ali's Bedouin. He asked me what it was I was carrying and when I explained, he plainly showed the contempt he felt for such work. We were strolling along, side by side, when a wretched mongrel trotted across our front. Without checking his stride, the Bedouin raised his rifle and took a snap shot at the brute which, hit in the hind-quarters, dragged itself painfully away with horrid yelps of agony. I protested against this wanton cruelty, whereupon he turned upon me with a snarl, "Tehib al Kalb?"—"Do you love the dog?" It was useless to argue and we trudged on in silence, till, reaching the coral bluff already referred to, we seated ourselves to get cool, for it was terribly hot. The Bedouin sat cross-legged, his rifle across his knees, his body bent slightly forward and his eyes searching for some fresh target on which to try his skill. Suddenly,

"What sort of country is your country?" he asked. I gazed for a moment at the scene before me, here a patch of bare stony ground, there a low-lying, steamy marsh, some sand-hills shimmering in the heat, and I thought of England, of shady trees, of clear streams and above all, of cool, green grass, and I tried to convey something of this to my questioner. He listened for some time in silence and then said briefly, "But not so beautiful as this!" and he jerked his head forward, "which you would like to possess yourselves," he added, and his mouth twisted up at the corners superciliously.

To all of us, our own home land is, no doubt, the most beautiful spot on earth, and it is right, it should be so. But the second half of his reply, above all, the manner in which it was expressed, conveying as it did, both jealousy and distrust, was not so pleasing to my ears. Yet, experience was to teach me that this phrase conveyed the whole attitude of mind of the Oriental towards the Westerner and, indeed, explains many of our difficulties, then and now. My companion was only a simple Bedouin, one of the crowd, but he undoubtedly voiced the generally accepted belief in British intentions.

This distrust added very considerably to our difficulties, but nevertheless, a camp was pitched on the ground near the "Sherm." Aeroplanes were landed and an aerodrome prepared on the high ground.

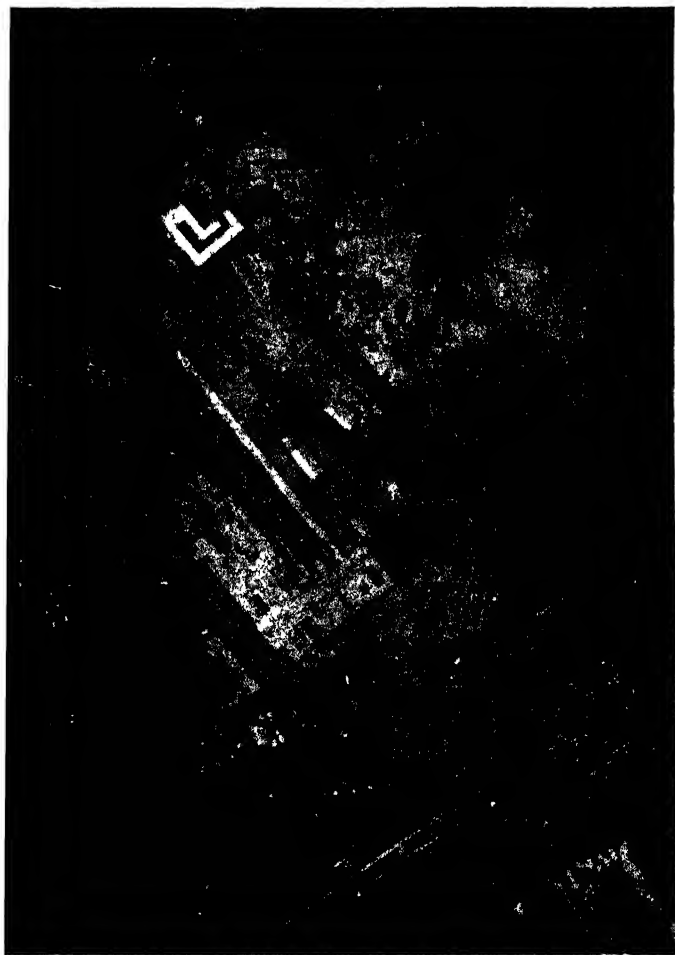
Machine-gun positions were selected and wired, and "three-pounder" emplacements made. For if the Arabs did not, or would not, realize the serious position, we did, and it was incumbent on us to attempt to save them, in spite of themselves.

Of the interior of the country we had no maps, so

reconnaissance was carried out by air. Every day, one or two machines would fly northward, and from these, photographs, sketches and bearings, which were later checked and re-checked, were taken, till the Air Force produced a map of a vast stretch of territory, which, considering the difficulties encountered, was wonderfully accurate. Not content with this, on hearing that the Turks were bringing down reinforcements to Medina and were making a large ammunition dump near the Damascus gate of the city, Captain Ross, D.S.O., had the temerity to fly there on an antiquated B.C.2 bus, having no fighting value and, in spite of a Turkish fighting plane being sent up to attack him, he skilfully avoided it, took some beautiful photographs which proved the information to be incorrect, and returned safely to Rabegh.

All this time, a fierce conflict was being waged between King Hussein and the British Government, concerning the sending of a British brigade to protect Rabegh.

King Hussein, repeated *ad nauseam* that the Hedjaz was holy territory. "To send British troops there would have disastrous political effects." The British Government, on the other hand, realized that if nothing was done, a disaster would inevitably result. If the revolt was suppressed by the Turks, the result would be highly prejudicial to British prestige, since Britain, having given her bond to help the Arab cause, would be accused in this eventuality by the Mohammedans of the world as having basely betrayed their friends. The Sherif was in no way concerned with British prestige, but his vanity prevented him from appreciating the dangers which threatened him, and he spent his



THE RAILWAY TERMINUS AND "DAMASCUS" GATE, MEDINA. THIS BEAUTIFUL AIR-
PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN AT GREAT RISK BY CAPTAIN ROSS, D.S.O., DURING THE
OPERATIONS FROM AN ANTIQUATED B.C.2 "BUS," AND DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF A

TURKISH FIGHTING PLANE TO BRING HIM DOWN.

energies and time arguing with the Foreign Office about the future of Aleppo, which had yet to be conquered from the Turk, and totally ignored the actualities of the position close at hand. The British Government used its utmost endeavour to persuade the Sherif to take a serious view of the military situation of his forces in the field. Indeed, a defeat of the Arabs at Rabegh would have meant the extinction of the Sherifian family, and the shattering of all hopes for Arab freedom. Nevertheless, the Sherif continued his wordy warfare regarding the eventual fate of Aleppo, and ignored the critical state of his hard-pressed troops.

Thus a deadlock was reached and at length, telegrams from England showed that the British Government was losing patience and was ready to abandon the whole venture, and cut its losses, however inconvenient it might be.

Luckily, at this crisis, Lawrence arrived, and by visiting Feisal in the field, was able to re-awaken interest in the Arab cause in Cairo. But, personally, I felt most strongly that the only hope of convincing the British Government as to the vital necessity for continuing its support, and for disregarding King Hussein's stupid distrust, could only be done by someone from the spot going to England to explain matters. Furthermore, it was essential that the War Office should receive first-hand information of the actual military situation, if that hard-pressed Department was to be persuaded into providing a greater material support. I made up my mind to go myself, if it could be managed, for I was convinced that failing such personal touch with London, nothing but disaster was to be looked for.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CABINET DECIDES

MATTERS being as unsatisfactory as described in the previous chapter, I used my utmost endeavours to go to England and talk matters over with Sir Mark Sykes. I could hardly rest night or day on account of my impatience to get away.

After many difficulties I received the necessary permission to proceed home. I employed every artifice I could think of to hasten my journey and, at length, on November 8th, I reached Victoria Station, at 9 p.m.

I went straight to the telephone and rang up Sir Mark Sykes, who was luckily at home. When he knew who was at the other end of the phone, he expressed the utmost astonishment.

"Good gracious ! how did you get here, you are the very fellow I want to see," he exclaimed. "Come round at once."

This, of course, I did, and we talked till the small hours of the morning. I told him, at length, about the situation, as I saw it, with all the dangers I have described, and emphasized the fact that, in my opinion, England would make one of her greatest blunders if she abandoned the Arab cause.

All the time, Sir Mark Sykes kept walking backwards and forwards, as the rapidity of his thoughts stirred his limbs to action. At length, when we had talked

over every aspect of the situation, he asked me if I would be afraid to repeat to the cabinet the main features of what I had told him.

"Certainly not," I answered.

"Then be at No. 10 (Downing Street) at eleven o'clock," he said.

We arrived there almost simultaneously and were shown into the long, low room used as a sort of ante-chamber. On a table were piled a heap of red dispatch boxes with brass handles, and I remember speculating as to what important secrets they held, and what momentous decisions were conveyed in them.

The cabinet was sitting in the cabinet room, discussing the submarine campaign and how to meet it, as it was a most serious menace at this time. Scores of ships were being sunk daily, and at one time the nation was within a few days of being starved.

Nevertheless, Sir Mark Sykes opened the door and walked boldly in, and I was left sitting outside, gazing at a shut door, trying to imagine what was happening within, fearing to be summoned before this august body, yet fearful lest I might not be, and so fail to convince them of the urgency, and necessity, for sending help. But, after an interval, Sir Mark burst out again and I could see that he was greatly disturbed.

"They have put the matter off for this afternoon at three o'clock, when a select committee will discuss the situation," he jerked out. He stumped up and down the room in his agitation, impatiently kicked chairs out of his way and then, banging down his hand on the pile of red dispatch boxes, so that they slithered over the table with a clatter, at which

the Prime Minister's messenger's eyes bulged with shocked surprise, he said : " There is not an hour to be lost, not a *moment*—I can't stand this ! " and he again burst into the Cabinet room.

What the Cabinet thought of his interrupting their very serious deliberations in this manner, I cannot imagine. At any rate, he soon came out again, this time beaming with delight.

" We have got our way, every assistance is to be given, and all the men and ships we can spare are to be sent to Rabegh."

We then discussed the terms of the instructions which were to be issued, but just then the Cabinet meeting ended, and the Ministers trooped out. He took me up and introduced me to Mr. (now Sir Austen) Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for India, who was kind enough to invite me to dinner that evening, so that I could inform him more intimately as to what was happening.

He also introduced me to Sir William Robertson, Chief-of-the-General-Staff, who looked keenly at me and then said :

" I hear you are one of those fellows who think the Arab is no damned good at all ? "

" No, sir," I answered, " I think that you cannot expect them, in their present state of organization, to hold trenches against disciplined troops, but as guerrilla fighters they will be splendid."

" Umph ! " said Sir William, and strode rapidly away. What did this non-committal " Umph " mean ?

I was given little time for conjecture, for Sir Mark plucked me by the sleeve. " Come on," he whispered, " we must get that telegram off," and then he almost ran towards the Houses of Parliament.

For he was also a Member of Parliament, and the House was sitting.

All of a sudden he stopped and said, " You are a fool, you should have said that the Arabs are little angels with wings."

" Hang it all," I said, " you surely do not expect me to tell the Chief-of-the-Staff a lie ! "

" Never mind," he said, and away we went once more, as fast as he could walk.

We entered the building, and there, in the vast hall, he hastily drafted a telegram in pencil on a half-sheet of paper. This telegram was to be sent on the authority of the Cabinet, to Egypt, instructing the authorities there to hold in readiness a Brigade of British troops, to have ships available, and to render all possible assistance, both political and military. This precious document he handed to me and instructed me to go to the Foreign Office and give the draft personally to Lord Hardinge (then Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) and to no one else. So I made my way across Westminster bearing this scrawl which represented the orders of a Cabinet.

On reaching the Foreign Office I was shown to Lord Hardinge's messenger, who went in to announce me, but instead of being ushered in, his private secretary came out and asked my business.

I informed him that I had a telegram drafted by Sir Mark Sykes on the authority of the Cabinet and which I was to deliver to Lord Hardinge himself.

" That is all right," he said, " give it to me."

" I am sorry I cannot do that," I replied. " I was told to give it to Lord Hardinge himself."

He looked a bit non-plussed at my refusal, then he smiled and said : " I give you my word it is all

right, I am his private secretary and I will give it to him myself and at once." So I gave him this vital telegram which saved the Arab cause; but I did not feel happy until I had told Sir Mark Sykes what I had done.

Thus it was that the British Cabinet, although burdened with the ghastly responsibilities of the War, gave this matter their consideration and decided to render their aid to yet one more ally in sore straits. To whom did not England render aid in that terrible time? But how many now remember her generosity?

It was indeed a strange coincidence that, when the matter was hanging in the balance, I should have arrived home at the exact moment to give Sir Mark Sykes the necessary information to strengthen his hand. Chance—fate—and to what end?

That evening I dined with Mr. Chamberlain, who showed the greatest personal interest in, and sympathy for, the Arab movement, about which he questioned me at length. He asked me, with what object I do not know to this day—but possibly to gain assurance of the loyalty of the Mohammedan troops: "If we should wish to send you on a very confidential mission, could you get six men of your regiment to follow you, no matter what its nature or its dangers?"

I thought for a moment and then replied: "Not six, but two hundred."

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Absolutely," I answered.

"And what makes you so sure?" he asked next.

"I think I can best answer that question by telling you a short story," I replied, and I related to him the following:

"Just before the War started, you will remember that there was a mixed boundary commission,

consisting of Russian, Turkish, Persian, and British officers delineating the frontier between Turkey and Persia, and that my regiment had been selected to send an escort for the British representatives, consisting of a British officer, an Indian officer, and twenty men. Just when the War broke out, the boundary commission was right up in the north, somewhere in Armenia.

“ The British officer, Captain Brooke, was recalled by telegram and came back via Constantinople. He left the escort in the charge of an Indian officer, Tiwakli Khan by name, to whom he also confided the care of his dog and two white tail-less Persian chickens.

“ Tiwakli Khan, with his twenty men and horses, the baggage, the dog and the chickens, proceeded to march back to the Persian Gulf, a mere trifle of 800 miles, as the crow flies.

“ He made, in the first instance, for Baghdad, but Turkey having by then entered the War against us, he struck off into the interior of Persia, going via Hamadan and Ispahan. Shortly after leaving the latter city he entered a district which was in rebellion—having been incited thereto by German intrigue—and the rebels, being violently anti-British, he encountered tremendous difficulties and dangers. Finally, he reached a place in the mountains and put up in the caravanserai. Here, while his tired men were cooking their evening meal, a friendly disposed Persian crept in, and taking him aside, whispered in his ear that the local chief had arranged to attack him and slay him, and his men, while they slept. A nice situation—twenty tired, desperately tired, men in the heart of Persia, surrounded by murderous gangs of robbers, and shut in the walled khan which had but one exit—with no

chance of succour. A situation to try the bravest.

"Now, when on the boundary commission, the escort in order to create a suitable impression, had taken with them their full dress uniform, which is resplendent with scarlet, blue and gold. Tiwakli Khan then donned this uniform, and with his sword by his side, his medals on his breast, he marched alone out of the caravanserai and boldly asked to be shown where this bloodthirsty chief lived. On the house being pointed out, he demanded to see the chief and was led into his presence.

"Tiwakli Khan then said: 'It has come to my ears that you intend to murder me and my men, but before you do so, I would wish to tell you who I am, for surely if you knew you would hesitate to perform this act.'

" 'And who are you ? ' asked the chief.

" 'I am the representative of King George,' said Tiwakli Khan proudly. 'Slay me and my men—if you can, that is your affair. I am the king's servant,' and he glared at him fiercely, 'But if we perish King George, the King of England, will require an explanation from you.'

"For some time, the bandit chief remained silent. Every now and then he would look up under his lowered brows at Tiwakli Khan, who met his glance with unwavering resolution and proud contempt. Finally, the courage of the soldier beat down the murderous greed of the robber. The chief smiled. 'God is merciful; why should I seek to destroy my brothers in religion,' and he ordered the sweetened tea to be brought, the sign of friendship. Later, he invited Tiwakli and his men to a banquet and escorted him through the turbulent country.

"After this and many other dangerous adventures,

having traversed, in all, 1,600 miles, Tiwakli reached India in safety and handed over to me at the Depôt nineteen men, one having died from pneumonia through exposure to the bitter cold ; nineteen horses, one having fallen over a precipice ; the baggage complete, one dog, and two tail-less Persian chickens ! ”

“ And what was done for that man ? ” Mr. Chamberlain asked.

“ Nothing,” I replied.

“ And where is he now ? ”

“ With my regiment in France,” I answered.

“ Then go to the India Office to-morrow morning and tell Sir James Dunlop-Smith from me to send a telegram to France with the request that he be sent over at once to London.”

The next morning, I went to the India Office, as Mr. Chamberlain had directed me and was informed that he had himself already dispatched the wire.

Tiwakli Khan was brought to London and decorated by the King himself, whose honour he had upheld.

Mr. Chamberlain did something that day which will live for ever in the native village far away in the Punjab, where Tiwakli Khan lives. For he has a little bit of silver, or it may be bronze, on which is impressed the head of His Majesty the King, whose servant he was, even to death, but who did not let his faithfulness pass by. Would that there were more British Ministers who had the vision to see how to bind our Indian subjects to the throne, and not only our Indian subjects ; who could realize that often with the Oriental, the simplest act exemplifying understanding, sympathy and appreciation is more potent than the most comprehensive treaty.

The day following, November 12th, I received a

telegram from Colonel Wigram, the King's private secretary, saying that the King wished to see me the next day.

So then, having spent most of the night polishing up my uniform, and, having started one hour too soon and then being very nearly late, I presented myself at Buckingham Palace.

I was received by the King alone in a room, the sides of which were covered with cases containing the most wonderful collection of weapons, swords, daggers and shields, all heavily encrusted with jewels.

His Majesty, evidently seeing my nervousness, very kindly drew my attention to these, which he told me, had mostly been presented to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, His Majesty King Edward, and himself, by the princes of India.

The King then sat down and asked me to sit beside him.

I found that he had a marvellous knowledge of everything which had occurred in Arabia and Egypt. I was amazed at what he knew, even to the characteristics of his representatives.

He said to me earnestly: "Don't let anything happen there such has occurred in the Dardanelles."

I promised His Majesty that there was no such risk.

He then dumbfounded me by thanking me for what I had done for my country. I had no words with which to reply, but could only stare like a dumb fool.

I longed to tell him that there was not one of his subjects who would not give every ounce of their strength to serve him. For myself, I would rather have had those words, so little deserved, than any reward in the world.

It was a great comfort to know that the King knew of all that we were doing, and was watching events with such keen interest and sympathy, although he must have been nearly crushed down by the anxieties through which his England and Empire was passing. As I bowed myself from the room I was struck by his seeming loneliness, and the anxious sadness of his face. He stood there in the middle of that vast chamber surrounded with its cabinets of gold and jewels a lonely figure, but a noble personification of his Empire's greatness and its sorrow.

The next day I was summoned to the War Office and was told that General MacDonough, head of our Intelligence Service, wished to see me.

When I was shown into his room, he was seated, his back to the window, his face in shadow, a big man "complete." Everything in as good order on his person as on his huge table. He received me gravely and motioned me to a big leather arm-chair, so that I sat facing him, my face in bright light.

"What is this about sending troops to the Arabs?" he asked, looking at me keenly.

"They need help badly," I answered. "If we don't back them up better, they will collapse."

"But why *should* we help them?" he asked.

"Because if you don't, we will suffer for it later on by complete loss of prestige, for we have so far encouraged them to embark on this dangerous enterprise and it will be an act of betrayal if we leave them now to be crushed."

"But why should it be more dangerous to our prestige than our retirement from the Dardanelles?" he insisted.

"Because," I answered, "the Dardanelles involved

no religious question. The Arab revolt, on account of Mecca, is very closely connected with religious sentiment, which affects the Mohammedans in India very closely and a desertion of the Arabs would have an extremely bad effect among the Indian troops. We will be accused of enticing the Arabs to revolt by empty promises, in order to destroy them."

But he continued baiting me with his "Why this?" and "Why that?" until I became absolutely desperate. At last, I am ashamed to say, he goaded me into losing my temper.

"Well," I said angrily, "I have given you my views. If you want to send troops, then for goodness sake send them, but if, after all that I have said, you do not desire to—then don't. Yours is the responsibility."

Then he burst out into a great roar of laughter. He had been testing my sincerity, and I think my loss of temper pleased him more than any of my replies.

I have had a very great respect for General MacDonough ever since. Indeed, he *was* the greatest Intelligence Officer we have ever had.

Sir Mark Sykes informed me, a few days later, that he wished me to go out to the Red Sea again, and so I once more left England.

I felt that I had a message of good cheer to take out with me, for in spite of the serious happenings in France, the Arab cause was receiving due attention, and the Government and the War Office were anxious to help as much as the difficulties, with which they had then to contend, permitted.

Many of those who were connected with the Arab revolt, including Lawrence, became so en-

grossed in it that they tended too much to the Arab point of view, and too little to the English. They never thought of the anxious deliberations of the Cabinet, which had to consider not only Arabia, but every sphere in which we were engaged and that, although perfectly willing to support the Arabs to the fullest extent and help them towards national unity, there were other vital interests to be considered, both for England and other nations.

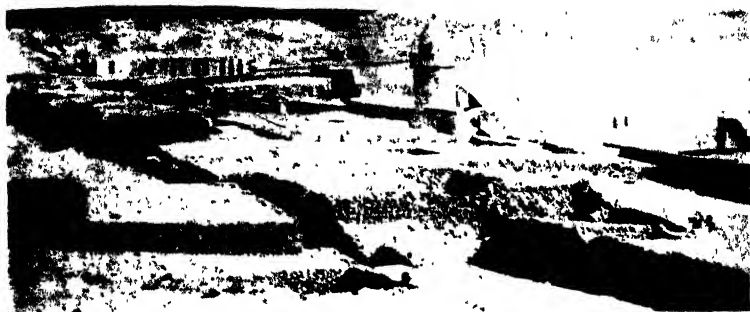
At any rate, the crisis was past, England would do her part. The future lay with the Arabs and those leading them. Would they justify our faith in them?

CHAPTER IX

THE ALARM AT YENBO AND THE CAPTURE OF AL WEJH

ON reaching Cairo, I was ordered by General Clayton to rejoin Wilson at Rabegh, and thither I proceeded on the *Dufferin*, sister ship to the *Hardinge*. We reached our destination on Christmas Day, and the hospitable Wilson had, by some magic means, prepared a meal worthy of the occasion. A regular camp was pitched on shore and the guests, who assembled in his tent, were in themselves a sufficient indication of the change which had taken place since I was last there. The Air Force had been doubled, and they had their own ship as tender to their sea-planes. A fine array of warships was standing by, including a monitor, the M31, and a system of defence had been drawn up. The ships' crews provided a sufficient garrison to secure Rabegh effectively against any force the Turks were in a position to send against it.

There was still a danger, however, and a considerable one. The Turks might advance on Mecca by avoiding Rabegh altogether, so that the situation still gave cause for great anxiety. And then a solution of all our troubles presented itself. As so often happens in like circumstances, it was extremely simple. It arose really out of the question which we asked ourselves, "Why leave the initiative perpetually with the Turk?"



AL WFJH.



"HE LAY HIS FACE UPTURNED TO THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY. SALIM, SMILING ALL OVER WITH SATISFACTION, SAID 'MAYIT,' DEAD."
(See p. 126.)

Sea power gave us an immense advantage, it allowed us to effect a landing, where and when we would. A 700 mile littoral made it impossible for the Turk to maintain an adequate defence against a continued attack by sea and land. Very cleverly, therefore, Fakri Pasha, aided by tribal and other jealousies, kept the Arab forces separated.

On the other hand, the arid nature of the country, the lack of communications and the consequent difficulties in supplying an Arab force with its necessities, compensated the Turkish command in a great measure for the loss of control. But on the whole the advantages lay with us, and it was essential to take the initiative. But how to deprive the Turk of it? Obviously, by attacking him. This presented an apparently insurmountable difficulty. The Arabs were not yet in a state to undertake a serious offensive. Although a British brigade was held in readiness in Egypt for service at Rabegh, Wilson, quite rightly, advised, for political reasons, that it should not be used except in an extreme emergency. In any case, it would only have been utilized for defensive purposes. There remained then, only two ways of attacking the Turks; by air and by raids on their communications. Attacks by air were difficult from Rabegh; they could only be effective if carried out intensively and sustained for a considerable time and, for this, sufficient machines were not available. The Turkish communications were, however, an easier proposition. In effect, the Medina railway was the sole Turkish means of supply. If attacks were made on this lengthy and exposed line, it might cause them to concentrate on its defence and, by this means, use up in the protection of this line, those troops needed

for an offensive towards Mecca. Furthermore, an attack on the railway would threaten the isolation of Medina, to which the Turks attached considerable importance. Its loss would have very serious political results, and they could not risk the loss of the city at the expense of such a very doubtful adventure as a march on Mecca with limited effectives.

It was finally decided, then, to raid the Medina railway. To facilitate this, a base was necessary within reasonable reach of the line and from which an expedition could be organized to cut the line, or from which demolition parties could be fitted out and despatched.

Yenbo was in our hands, but it was too far away from the railway and too near the Turkish forces south of Medina. The small sea-ports north of Yenbo, Al Wejh, Muella and Akaba were still held by the Turks. Of these it was finally agreed that Al Wejh was the most suitable base for the proposed operations, and offered the best prospects of capture by an attack by sea, assisted by Arab land forces. After a conference with Captain Boyle, Senior Naval Officer in the Red Sea, it was decided to make the attempt.

Hardly had this decision been arrived at, however, when we received news of a serious reverse suffered by Feisal near Nakhl Mubarak, on the road to Yenbo, which was apparently threatened by a Turkish force. Thither we repaired in great haste, Boyle concentrating every ship he could spare, for the defence of the port.

Yenbo, from the Arab point of view, was an important place, possessing a small but well-sheltered harbour, and an ideal base for Feisal and Abdulla.

The latter, with a force of about 6,000 Arabs, was somewhere in the region west of Medina, where exactly we did not know.

Yenbo is a small town, situated on a narrow isthmus, so that it is protected on all but one side by the sea. Beyond the town, a flat plain, affording no concealment, stretches away for some considerable distance. It was, therefore, an easy place to defend, and Boyle distributed his ships so as to rake the approach to the town, and in such manner as to make an attack extremely hazardous—in fact, next to impossible, unless the ships could be driven away by superior gun fire, or the attack carried out by night.

It was not in the least surprising, therefore, that the Turks made not the slightest attempt to come within range, nor do I think that they had any intention of so doing.

Their raid against Feisal and Zeid was intended, probably, to clear their right flank for an advance on Rabegh and to overawe the local tribesmen; and if this was, indeed, their intention, they were highly successful. At any rate, it had these results, and was carried out with unexpected ease.

The navy proved once more the value of sea-power, and up to this period—the end of December 1916—the ships had driven the Turks away from every coastal town from Aden to Yenbo. As far as the sea coast was concerned then, the initiative lay with us. In the interior, however, owing, in a measure, to a want of material (but far more to a lack of determination), to the splitting up of the Arab forces and to a very decided disinclination on the part of the tribesmen to leave their home districts, the Turks had been allowed to remain the aggressors. The fact that the Sheikh's sons jealously maintained

their independent commands facilitated the Turkish defence. Against the scattered Arab contingents they opposed a solid unity ; instead of divided councils and tribal jealousies the Turks had a single purpose kept ever before them by the inflexible will of Fakri Pasha. They only had to make a demonstration in force to scatter the Arabs to the four winds. These considerations made it the more imperative that Al Wejh should be occupied, and aggressive tactics employed against the railway as soon as possible.

Colonel Wilson, therefore, explained matters to Feisal and asked for his co-operation in the attack on the town. To this Feisal agreed, and after a short delay, set his tribesmen in motion for the venture.

The Turkish garrison at Al Wejh was estimated to number eight hundred men, including five hundred Agel—a kind of infantry mounted on camels. The Sherif Feisal, who was joined by Lawrence, had with him a force of about eight thousand Bedouin and it was arranged that this force, setting out in advance, should appear before the town simultaneously with the British sea forces at dawn on January 24th.

Feisal was to deliver his attack from the south and east ; the *Fox*, *Hardinge*, *Espiegle*, and other ships would support him with their guns, their fire being directed by seaplane, and, in order to prevent the Turks from escaping to the north, a landing force of four hundred Arabs was to be conveyed in the *Hardinge* and landed on the beach, two miles north of the town. These were supposed to be nominally under the control of Major Vickery, D.S.O., an officer of great experience with Arabs, who had been lent to assist in the revolt ; and myself. If necessary,

these four hundred Arabs would be supported by a naval landing party of about two hundred blue-jackets.

From these ambitious arrangements, it will be seen that the little town of Al Wejh was to be entirely surrounded, and its garrison was in for an unpleasant time.

However, when the scheme came to be put into actual execution, and the sea forces duly approached Wejh, punctually on the day and at the time appointed, there occurred a slight hitch. Feisal and his eight thousand men were still three days' march away! In the face of this desertion it was difficult to know what to do. Should we await his arrival? If we did so, then the probability was, that the garrison of Wejh, having been warned by our approach, would have slipped away, for their case was hopeless, and joined the Turks on the Medina Railway. This we were particularly anxious that they should not do, as they would then provide the latter with much needed reinforcements and would add considerably to the difficulties of railway demolition.

So it was hastily decided to carry out the original plan without the Sherif Feisal's assistance, and attempt to reduce the place with the means at our disposal. The actual attack by land was to be carried out by the four hundred Arabs mentioned above, whose task was originally intended to be a purely passive one. The two hundred bluejackets were to be landed to give the Arabs confidence, but were only to go into action in an emergency.

The morning was misty and the sea like oil as the units of our little fleet steamed slowly northward, like grey ghosts, to take up their fighting positions.

The first indication that we had reached our destination was afforded by a tall tower, standing on a bluff to the south of the town, set up to guide mariners to the small harbour which lay half concealed below the cliff. As we passed it, it loomed black and indistinct through the mist and seemed to sway, as the grey eddies swirled about it. But its dim outline was sufficient to put everyone on the alert, for we knew that our task had begun. We silently crowded the side of the ship, our eyes straining to pierce the mist, to see what manner of place it was we had to take.

The *Fox* slid silently inshore, while the *Hardinge*, in which I found myself, together with Vickery and our four hundred Bedouin, passed her by and made for a point two miles farther north; for here we were to land. The stopping of our engine was a signal that we had reached our destination. There brooded over the glassy waters an uncanny silence which was suddenly interrupted by the startling rattle of the anchor chains and, immediately, with little sound, the boats were lowered hastily, yet methodically, for there was no time to be lost!

No sooner were they free of their "falls" than our four hundred Bedouin tumbled helter-skelter into them. Unused to this form of craft, they fell over the thwarts, tripping each other up, and pushed and shoved to reach their places, those behind saving themselves at the expense of the shins of those in front. The boats rocked dangerously with this unaccustomed cargo, a queer, mixed collection of lean and hungry-looking men, whose beards were sparsely sown upon their chins, as if their growth had suffered from the lack of nourishment from their shrunken frames. Sad-looking and sombre too, their

solemn appearance was accentuated by their black camel-hair cloaks, which smelt like wet sheep and made one's body itch at the thought of their rough coarseness.

Manned by the ships' crews, the boats made at full speed for the beach, steering for a sandy cove about two hundred yards distant. This cove, which was protected by a high coralline bluff, offered excellent concealment for our landing.

The Arabs scrambled hurriedly out directly the boats touched the shore, and gathered together in a disordered mob in the centre of the cove.

Vickery and I landed in a more leisurely fashion and I joined them with the intention of discussing plans for the attack, but we were given little opportunity for so doing.

We were quickly to learn that we were to have little control over their actions, and the first shock we received was when half our number sat down under the shelter of the bluff and refused to take any further interest in the day's work, for they had no stomach for the fight, and we felt it useless to try to instil courage into such poor material.

This was rather a blow, for our forces had dwindled from eight thousand-odd to two hundred.

However, we were committed to the affair and away we went! When we climbed out of the hollow, where we had, so far, been concealed, the morning mists had cleared away and the Arabs stood huddled together for a short while and took stock of the position, craning their heads forward on their scraggy necks, their keen eyes sweeping the land before them.

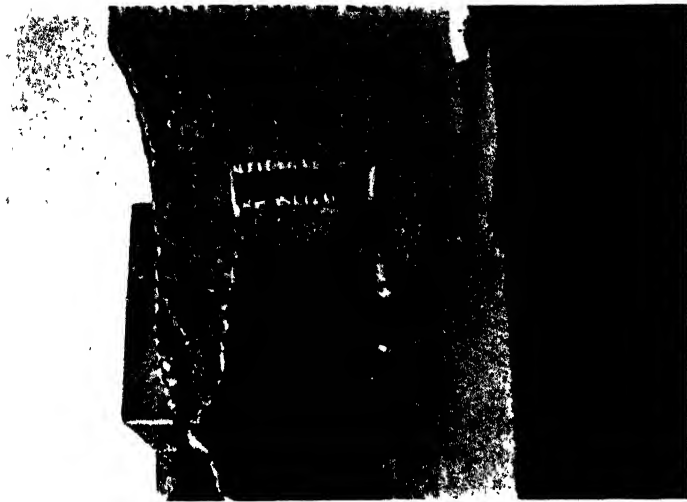
Two miles to the southward, the outline of the town of Al Wejh could be clearly seen, its houses

glistening white in the sunlight. The minaret of its solitary mosque and its guiding tower, stood up above its flat-topped houses and relieved its otherwise squat appearance, but it looked a happy little place, dancing there in the sunlight.

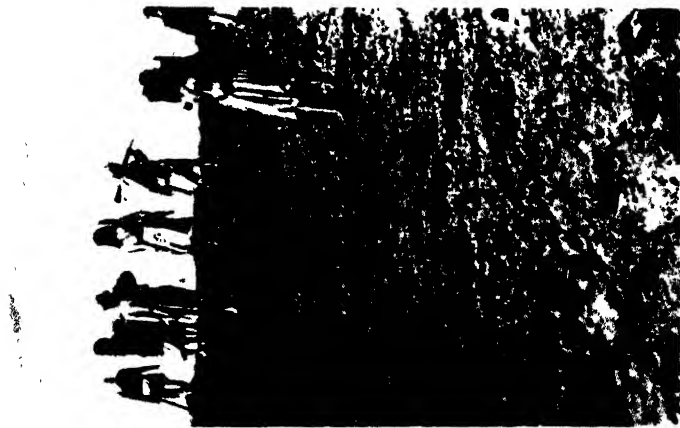
From the sea, the coralline rock, of which the coast was here composed, rose inland to a depth of about a mile and a half, in a gradual slope ending in a jagged cliff, which dived down suddenly to the lower ground beyond. This cliff was some fifty feet in height, running parallel to the sea and effectively concealed the country which lay beyond, forming a natural boundary to the left of our attack.

None of us had a notion of how the Turks were distributed, or in what numbers, nor did the Arabs seem to care, for after a casual survey, they split into three parties of diminishing strength.

The larger party, about one hundred strong, made at a trot, straight for the town by the shortest route. The outlying houses were held by the Turks, who opened rather a ragged fire on this disorderly advance. Their careless shooting claimed few victims, but here and there a black heap on the plains showed when a fluky shot had reached its mark. Undeterred by casualties, the Arabs continued on their way and made bald-headed for the nearest house. Having entered it and slain all whom they found there, they proceeded to loot it. Later, I saw the result. In the street, before its entrance, lay three dead Arabs, and a pool of congealed blood covered the grey, flat stone, which did duty as a doorstep, and in which a swarm of flies were settled. The interior was in a state of indescribable confusion. Everything was smashed, even the legs of the chairs. The whole place was littered



ARAB DEAD OUTSIDE A CAPTURED DWELLING
IN AL WEJH.



ARABS UNDER FIRE AT THE TAKING OF
AL WEJH, SHOWING THEIR SUPREME
CONTEMPT OF DEATH.



knee deep in kapok. Mattresses, pillows and cushions had been torn to shreds in the frantic search for the gold the Bedouins hoped might be concealed within.

Having taken and looted one house, they made for the next and treated it and its inmates in like manner; thus they proceeded to reduce the place by attrition, going from house to house, eating their way into the bowels of the town.

Meantime, another group, about seventy, having located some Turks in trenches situated just outside the town to the north, disdaining loot, went forth to blood themselves. Being occupied elsewhere, I did not know how they fared, but there were no Turks remaining by the evening in this area.

Thirty remained under a young sheikh named Salim, quite a youth, a jolly little fellow with a merry smile, and these made for the cliff I have described on the left of our advance. Here, the Turks were hurriedly entrenching themselves, and we could see their heads bobbing about on the sky line, as they bent and rose to their task.

I attached myself to this party, for I was fearful, lest the enemy, seeing the disordered nature of our advance, would move along the concealed ground and attack us in the rear. The ground there offered a glorious opportunity for a counter offensive, which, under the circumstances, must have been disastrous for us. But leadership seemed lacking and the defence, fortunately, was as disjointed as the attack; but of this at the time I was, of course, unaware, and all I could hope to do was to keep a general look-out on this amazing fight and try to prevent any sudden disaster overwhelming us.

It must be confessed that the Turkish defence was,

luckily for us, extremely badly organized. This was due principally to the fact that they had received news of Feisel's advance towards Wejh and had made their preparations to repel an attack from the south. The extraordinary warfare, which burst upon them suddenly from the north, took them by surprise, and they sprinkled their detachments in loose fragments about the heights.

Away went Salim and his thirty men, their rifles carried over their shoulders by the muzzles, and their abas, or cloaks, tucked into their waist-bands to allow their limbs free action.

They walked at a rapid pace, straight for their objective. After covering about one thousand yards in this manner, a spasmodic rifle-fire was opened upon them so they spread themselves out in rough extended order, and broke into a jog-trot.

Thus we covered the intervening ground till we dropped into a slight depression, one hundred yards distant from the enemy, and in which we were temporarily concealed. The Arabs then proceeded to crawl up the slope of the hollow, the edge of which reached close to the Turkish trenches, from which it was separated by a slightly convex stretch of stony ground.

On reaching its lip, they lay prone, in a straggling line and would suddenly bob up, fire a shot at an opposite opponent thirty yards away and then bob down again. They reminded me of a whole series of Jacks-in-the-box, jerking in succession. The Turks, never knowing where the next head would appear, as there was no method in their appearance, were nearly always caught unawares. Thus, the Arabs received little punishment ; the Turks, on the other hand, being fixed in their positions, received

the greater damage. The next day, eleven corpses testified to the success of the Arab's hide-and-seek method of fighting.

Always fearful of the left flank, I constantly cast an anxious eye over the cliff, to see that the enemy were not creeping round in our rear—the most obvious thing to do. It was as well I did so. Looking over the edge, I saw a Turk coming round a corner of the cliff, 100 yards distant, followed by another. They came slowly, picking their way carefully over the broken ground, their grey woollen uniforms making them conspicuous against the red background of the cliff.

I silently signalled to Salim with a beckoning finger, to come to my side, in order to show him what was occurring. I naturally expected that when he saw what was happening he would hastily summon some of his men, and pour a rapid fire into these advancing Turks. He did nothing of the kind, and his first thought was for the tenderness of his buttocks. He sat down carefully, to avoid the jagged bits of rock strewed about the spot. His rifle, having a spent cartridge in it, he drew back the bolt and ejected it. Although he was armed with a weapon of the latest pattern, with a magazine for cartridges, which could be rammed home in a flash, he had the bullets spread singly about his body in three bandoliers, and he proceeded to try to tug out a cartridge, which resisted his pulling from some awkward place situated halfway round his back.

Meantime, the original Turks were now joined by three others and I viewed this increase with anxiety, and felt a natural impatience at Salim's method of dealing with the situation. At length the cartridge,

for which he had been fishing, came out with a jerk and he loaded his rifle, carefully pulled up the sleeves of his aba, took steady aim, and let fly at the leading Turk. The bullet struck the latter in the middle of his forehead, and he fell backwards without a sound, and lay, his face upturned to the bright blue sky, his rifle falling with a clatter down the cliff.

Salim, smiling all over with satisfaction, nodded towards the corpse, and said, "Mayit," "Dead," and looked as if he expected me to pat him on the back, but somehow for this I had small inclination. He then repeated the performance, but rather more quickly, and his second shot, less well aimed, hit the second Turk less harmfully, who, taken by surprise by the sudden death of the leader, had foolishly stopped dead, and the man, dropping on his hands and knees, crawled painfully back to the shelter of the projecting corner of the cliff, and here later on we found him lying dead. The other Turks hastily retreated, but Salim, thinking that this was the finest "shooting-box" of his experience, hastily piled a few stones in front of him, presumably to afford him shelter or concealment, but which fulfilled neither purpose, and remained squatting there, in expectant attitude, waiting for the next Turk to show himself round the corner.

Meantime, the Jack-in-the-Box business had been continuing just beside us, and I became somewhat impatient at its dragging on, for it brought us no nearer to a definite conclusion. I suggested to Salim, therefore, that we rush the Turks, but he, quite rightly, pointed out that his men had no bayonets, moreover, he was far more content to watch for more Turks to round the bend.

I then suggested that I should go down to the beach, and having signalled for a boat, go on board the *Hardinge* to point out the Turkish position and get her guns into action, and so end the matter. This suggestion, Salim thought, was an excellent one, and I proceeded to carry it out.

On arriving on the sea-shore, however, I found Vickery installed there with a "helio,"¹ with which he flashed our needs to the *Hardinge*. After a short delay, the ship answered our request by sending the first shell hurtling towards the Turks. It pitched short, and glancing off the hard surface of the slope, screamed in protest and burst with a roar in the hilly country far beyond. And so with each succeeding one. The range was too short for the 4.7, and its flat trajectory prevented the shell from dropping into the Turkish trenches.

After watching the ineffectiveness of this target practice for a while, we noticed, some distance away, a body of men marching towards us, and, apparently, ten feet off the ground. The mirage prevented our distinguishing who they were, and accounted for their apparent acrobatic performance.

"Who do you think they are?" asked Vickery.

"I have not a notion," I answered, "nor can I make them out even through my glasses, but they look to me like Turks."

"Well, if so, we are done," he replied, "anyway, go and see who they are."

Which I did.

As I drew near they took up a more normal position on the ground, which was satisfactory, and then, on still nearer approach, I saw, to my

¹ Heliograph, a signalling instrument which acts by flashing the sun's rays from a mirror.

relief, that they were the Naval landing party.

On board their ships, our mariners are an incomparable set of men, who perform their complicated duties with a marvellous speed and precision. On shore, on a mission of the nature we were engaged upon, they made me perspire with anxiety.

After being cooped up on their ships for so long, they regarded this affair as a most enjoyable picnic.

On they came in serried ranks, their machine guns conspicuously carried on stretchers, about fifty yards to the flank. No scouts, no flank-guards, none of those elementary precautions to which a soldier is trained from the first day of his joining his regiment.

I made towards the Commander, saluted, and said, "I don't know whether you know it or not, sir, but the Turks are in position just over there," and I pointed to their trenches, eight hundred yards distant.

"You don't say so," he replied, "how interesting," and he unslung his binoculars and had a peep.

The matter appeared to interest his men also, for they crowded in our rear to hear the news, and catch a glimpse of the enemy.

"Yes," I said, "and if they have a machine gun, they will shoot you and your men to bits." For we were standing fully exposed on rising ground.

"Quite right," he answered. "Now, you men, get away down there," and to my relief they withdrew, albeit grudgingly, into the hollow behind, in which they were partly concealed.

"Now what would you advise us to do?" he asked.

"Well, you are commanding here, and not I," I replied.

"Yes, yes, I know, but what would you do if you were I?" he asked.

"Well, I should first throw out some scouts to make sure you are not surprised, and I would put your machine guns where they can protect you, and I would keep your men under cover," I answered.

"Excellent," he said, and proceeded to carry out these suggestions, very unwillingly it must be admitted, for the Navy was not accustomed to playing so passive a rôle, and it irked them to sit there, hour after hour, and see others do the fighting. The more so as the Turks obstinately refused to quit.

At length, towards evening, as there seemed little prospect of a final decision being reached that day, it was decided to call a halt till the following morning. The fighting was still going on in the town, and it was useless to attempt to recall the Arabs from there. But we *did* manage to get the others to come back, which they did without loss, and that in spite of the fact that they strolled back, as if out for an airing.

We asked the Naval party to take up an outpost position for the night, and to prepare to re-commence operations at dawn the next morning.

The Naval landing party carried out their part of the proposition excellently, and the men piled arms and lay down beside them. There was only one small drawback, that the place where they slumbered was between the outpost line and the enemy!

I slept among the outposts.

The next morning we were early astir. The *Fox* again stood close in-shore, and trained her guns on such localities as it was known were still held, and which could be seen, for houses hampered the view. The Naval landing party were then spread out in

skirmishing order, and advanced upon the town in more orderly array than on the previous day.

As we passed over the ground where the fighting had taken place, there was no sign of any live Turks, and it was soon apparent that they had retired during the night, but the town itself was still held by a brave remnant.

The Arabs who had been with us the previous day, now joined their comrades in the town, and the gradual reduction of the place continued. We did our best to save the remnant from the revengeful Arab, and did, in fact, rescue a number of them, by inducing them to surrender to us, and these we collected under an armed guard. The remainder, some of whom occupied the mosque, which they had put into a state of defence, refused to surrender. Still, wishing to save this gallant band from uselessly sacrificing their lives, we asked our prisoners if one of these would come in with us with a flag of truce, and persuade them to cease their resistance.

A burly, non-commissioned officer at once stood forth, and expressed his willingness to assist in the venture.

Tying my handkerchief on to my stick, I handed him this improvised emblem of peace, and under Vickery's direction, we made our way to the centre of the town.

When we approached the mosque, where lay the chief resistance, our envoy went forward and parleyed with the defenders. They, however, obstinately refused to entertain the idea of surrendering, and a fierce argument took place between the bearer of the flag and the defenders of the mosque. Finally, the envoy, but lately himself one of the garrison, lost all patience, and flinging down the flag of truce,

demanded to be given a rifle, in order to persuade these "magnun" (madmen), by more forcible means.

I recovered the flag of truce, and under its doubtful protection, we retired in as dignified a manner as we could under the circumstances, and the fighting recommenced, and dragged on in the same desultory fashion as before.

The defence was undoubtedly sustained by the diehard element in the mosque, where, relying on the inviolability of the sacred edifice to bombardment, as they thought, they were apparently prepared to resist until their ammunition or their supplies gave out. Captain Boyle, however, decided that mosque, or no mosque, an end must be put to the affair, and the back wall of the building being visible from the sea, he ordered that a round from one of the *Fox's* 4.7's be directed at this target.

The effect was immediate. A huge gaping hole was blown in the wall, and fifteen very bewildered and very dusty and begrimed men staggered out without their weapons, in token of surrender. Strangely enough, none had been killed, and for this I was glad, for I had the greatest admiration for their conduct.

The garrison of the mosque having surrendered, those in the neighbouring houses likewise did so, and the town finally passed into our hands. I repaired to the schoolhouse, which had been used as the Turkish headquarters, to gather such documentary information as might prove useful.

My task was interrupted by a most appalling din of shouting and yelling. Thinking some unsuspected bodies of Turks had attacked the town while we were engaged in looting it, I hastened out to discover the cause.



THE RE-BIRTH OF A NATION.
THE EMIR FEISAL'S ARRIVAL AT AL WEJH, AFTER ITS CAPTURE,
SHOWING THE VARIOUS ARAB CONTINGENTS JOINING HIS STANDARD.

and again at Habban, sufficient for a force of this size to have made the venture. But no attempt whatsoever was made to keep faith, and it was a reflection, both on Feisal's leadership and still more on his British advisers.

If it was impossible for the whole force of 8,000 men to have reached Wejh in time—and even this is doubtful—it was a sad lack of initiative, not even to attempt to get a contingent there to lend *some* aid.

This neglect was typical of the whole Arab force from now onwards. The failure, time after time, to make the necessary sacrifices to achieve important objects robbed the campaign of its military value, and still more, as will be explained later, lost the Arabs their only chance of a political success of even greater magnitude.

CHAPTER X

I N E R T I A

THE taking of Al Wejh was but a minor operation. The effects of its capture were profound and immediate. The railway was now seriously threatened and the Turks hastily withdrew the forces threatening Rabegh and Yenbo, for its defence. The threat of this slender communication was the greater for the reason that the tribes from Wejh to the Maan plateau were now linked to Feisal. The Turks were therefore thrown on the defensive, the initiative passed definitely to the Arabs and all chance of quelling the revolt was gone for ever.

It is worth while reviewing the general position immediately following the capture of Wejh, for it has many points of interest and affords lessons of policy and military tactics worthy of our consideration.

After the capture of Wejh and the subsequent capture of Muweira farther north, the Turkish hold on the Hedjaz was confined to their possession of Medina and the railway connecting it with Damascus. The Hedjaz railway connected four points of strategical importance, Damascus, Deraa, Maan and Medina, the first and last-named having, in addition, an outstanding political value. The former because it was the real political centre of Arabia, the latter because it was, after Mecca, the most important city in the Moslem world.

From a military point of view, the possession of Medina gave the Turks no advantage whatsoever. On the contrary, its retention imposed a very severe strain on their resources and there was, in consequence, every apparent reason for its abandonment. Yet, in spite of their precarious situation, they clung to it tenaciously, even when great disaster threatened them elsewhere. In fact, they were still in possession of the city at the conclusion of the War.

The Turks must, therefore, have had weighty reasons for showing such determination with regard to the retention of this city.

The fact was, that Medina had an enormous *moral* value for the Turks, which quite outweighed military considerations.

So long as the Turks had possession of the city, it was a positive indication to the outside world and to those Oriental leaders, still hesitating to commit themselves, that they, the Turks, were still masters of the situation. The world, and in particular, the Moslem, might hear of the railway being cut, of raids and forays, but these conveyed little to their understanding, because as often as portions of the line were destroyed, they were repaired, and trains continued to pass between Maan and Medina, and Maan and Damascus.

On the other hand, the *loss* of the city would have been a shattering blow to Turkish prestige. It would have been a sign manifest of the weakening of Turkish resistance and would have had the equivalent effect of a severe military defeat in the main field of operations.

As the war progressed, moral factors had more and more influence on the belligerents. It is vain to say then, as Lawrence does, that it was Turkish stupidity

which made them cling on to this forlorn hope, or as he suggests, that we *wanted* them to remain in Medina,¹ or that they lost their Arabian possessions the night they failed to attack Yenbo.² The Turks could not be said to have lost their Arabian possessions till their main armies had been defeated, or by the War ending in the final overthrow of the Central Powers ; for even assuming the defeat of the Turks, it is evident that if the Central Powers had emerged victorious from the War and the Turks were found to be still in possession, as in fact they were, of Medina, at its conclusion, that fact would have had an enormous importance as justifying their claim to re-establish themselves in the Hedjaz.

The Arabs may be deemed, then, to have been extremely fortunate that their lack of initiative with regard to the capture of the city went unpunished.

The truth was, that the Arab movement lacked a leader of determination. The leaders it possessed were cramped in their views and apparently incapable of seeing its wider aspects or consequences. They played about with objectives of secondary importance and totally neglected those wider political and military necessities on which their whole energies should have been concentrated.

One would have thought that after the capture of Al Wejh, the scattered Arab contingents would have been concentrated and employed on a definite plan of campaign, having Medina or Maan as its immediate objective. Nothing of the kind was done and they continued to fritter away their opportunities on non-essentials. The necessity for taking Medina was recognized by Colonel Wilson and his staff, and a plan was carefully thought out

¹ *Revolt in the Desert*, page 66.

² *Revolt in the Desert*, page 40.

having this object in view; had this plan been put into operation, and carried out with determination, nothing could have prevented its success.

The plan was to attack Medain Saleh, an important Turkish post on the Hedjaz railway 200 miles north of Medina, and 150 miles due east of Al Wejh and, by maintaining a position there in force, permanently to destroy the railway for a considerable distance, thus isolating the city.

Sidi Abdulla, Feisal's brother, then situated in the Wadi Ais, west of Medina, was urged by letter and also personally by Lawrence, to take action against the city. He treated the messenger with ridicule, shooting, we were assured, a tin off his head in emulation of William Tell and remained totally inactive till the end of the campaign, in spite of the fact that he had under him a well-armed force of 7,000 men and was well supplied with machine guns.

Apart from the force under Abdulla, Feisal at Wejh had at least 12,000 men under his orders; all the tribes from Rabegh to Akaba, between the sea and the railway, were potential reinforcements; Ali at Rabegh had a force of 8,000 men under him, and there were strong detachments of the Juheina in the Yenbo region. A force totalling at least 30,000 men was available—if concentrated. In addition, there were numbers of capable and keen British officers, some of whom had years of experience with Arabs and desert warfare, and a number of Arab officers who had served with distinction with the Turks, notably General Jaafer Pasha, a highly trained and experienced officer, and Nuri Said, a very brilliant officer of the younger school, to advise and assist in organizing the Army and providing the necessary leadership.

In addition, there was the armoured car detachment, trained Indian machine-gunners, who had recently served in France. Mule-mounted infantry, mule machine-gun detachments, a unit of the Egyptian army, and aeroplanes to give the force the necessary stiffening and steadiness.

Every port on the Arabian coast from Aden to the Gulf of Akaba, with the exception of the town of Akaba itself, was in our hands. The Arabs always had the sea border to fall back to in the event of their suffering a reverse—a most unlikely contingency.

Against this formidable array of advantages, the Turks had 7,400 men with which to hold the city of Medina and its surrounding territory, and 400 miles of railway to guard. The only real advantage the Turks had was in their artillery, but this was only an asset where defence was concerned.

Everything, therefore, seemed propitious for the Arabs to take energetic action. Lawrence, at first a strong advocate of the Medain Saleh plan, suddenly and mysteriously became violently opposed to it, having meantime thought out a curious *independent* adventure connected with Akaba. The reasons he advanced for his change of ideas are extremely illuminating and worth repeating in his own words, for the attitude he here adopted towards the conduct of the revolt, affords one explanation of its failure, not it is true as a local revolt—local, for it affected only a part of Arabia—but as a *national* movement, and as an instrument of real value in the campaign against the Turks.

“So I began with three propositions,” he says. “Firstly, that irregulars would not attack places, and so remained incapable of forcing a decision.

Secondly, they were as unable to defend a line or point as they were to attack it. Thirdly, their virtue lay in depth, not face. . . . To hold a middle point would be expensive, for the holding force might be threatened from each side. The mixture of Egyptian troops with tribesmen was a moral weakness. If there were professional soldiers present the Bedouin would stand aside and watch them work." And again, "We must not take Medina. The Turk was harmless there. In prison in Egypt, he would cost us food and guards."¹

Sufficient has been said to dispose of the argument relating to the capture of Medina. The suggestion that important military operations should be desisted from, on account of the expense which prisoners might entail, is too ludicrous even to be taken seriously.

The Arabs were, in fact, perfectly capable of attacking and capturing places, either with, or without, the aid of regulars. The original attack of Mecca and Taif, where the Turks had artillery and the Arabs naught save rifles, showed clearly that the Arabs, if they really meant fighting, could force a decision and were to be seriously reckoned with. During the fight for Wejh, although "professional soldiers" were present, far from standing aside, they took the leading part, and it was almost impossible to restrain their enthusiasm. Later on, Sheik Ibn Jad, on his *own* initiative, captured the Turkish post of Guweira, taking 120 prisoners.² The capture of Fuweilah, by the Dhumaniyeh, and the attack and capture of Akaba, afford other examples of successful attacks on "places." That they were equally stubborn in defence, even against heavy

¹ *Revolt in the Desert*, page 66-67.

² *Revolt in the Desert*, page 113.

odds and handicapped by the confusion of a complete surprise, was clearly demonstrated by the splendid defence of Tafilah, where 600 of them totally destroyed a Turkish force of 900 infantry and 100 cavalry, supported by two mountain guns and twenty-seven machine guns. And although much of the credit for this action must go to the magnificent leadership of Lawrence, it does not alter the fact that well-led, the Arabs are the most stubborn defenders.

The garrison at Medain Saleh consisted, as far as I can remember, of about 200 men. It was distant from Medina 220 miles : from Maan 300 ; the only places where the Turks were in any force. The railway over the intervening country was protected solely by small posts, sufficient for patrolling the line, but hopelessly inadequate for repelling an attack in any force.

Medain Saleh then could have been rushed in a night by an overwhelming force of Arabs and regulars. The smaller posts having been captured, the railway and the telegraph line could have been destroyed for hundreds of kilometres north and south.

To restore the position, the Turks would have been forced to march either from Maan, or Medina, or possibly from both places ; but in the latter event, the telegraph having been cut, they could not have co-ordinated their movements, except by air, over a distance of 500 miles. To have sent a sufficient force to retake Medain Saleh, they would have been obliged to have depleted the garrisons of Maan or Medina and left these important places dangerously exposed. Furthermore, such an undertaking would have entailed a march of several hundred miles

through hostile territory, exposed night and day to attacks by the Arabs in that very method of fighting to which they were best accustomed and in which they were past masters.

Such an undertaking would have exposed the Turks to such appalling risks, that the idea of their making the attempt could have been entirely discounted.

There were then, no valid reasons for the Arab forces to have remained scattered and inactive for months on end. On the contrary, there was every reason and every opportunity for them to have concentrated and undertaken a serious offensive. Unfortunately, instead of the whole Arab strength being concentrated on an objective of primary importance, Lawrence, Feisel's chief adviser, went off on his quite unnecessary "flank march of 600 miles in length," and of two months duration, for the capture of Akaba.

Feisal remained at Wejh till long after Akaba was captured. Abdulla in the Wadi Ais was even more comatose. Ali's army at Rabegh of 8,000 dwindled away and large contingents of the Juheina in the neighbourhood of Yenbo, left his command on the plea of the necessity for them to protect their homes, which were, in fact, not threatened.

On the other hand, the Turkish defence was, considering the appalling situation in which they found themselves, masterly.

With a minimum number of effectives, they maintained their positions at Maan and Medina, till they were obliged to evacuate them by the terms of the Armistice. In spite of the fact that the railway was exposed to constant attack throughout its length of 800 miles from Damascus to Medina, they

repaired the damage with extraordinary persistency and commendable speed, and kept it working and supplying them till their crushing defeats by the British in 1918, destroyed the Turkish field army.

Military history affords no parallel of so slender and exposed a line of communication being maintained in the face of such difficulties. Any military student, considering the position after the capture of Wejh, would unhesitatingly have judged that Medina was as good as lost.

The Turkish policy of maintaining their positions, in spite of serious loss and damage, was perfectly sound and fully justified itself.

By maintaining their positions at Maan and Medina, they caused a dispersal of Arab strength, so that at no period were the Arabs in a position to collect in sufficient force to prove a real menace to the armies in the field in front of Allenby.

They delayed the co-operation of powerful tribes with Feisal.¹ For so long as the tribes saw the Turks still established at Maan and Medina, they doubted their defeat and saw no tangible signs of the victory of Feisal.

By keeping the railway working, they presented an irresistible lure for its destruction. Lawrence was obsessed throughout the campaign with the idea of destroying the railway.

Furthermore, excepting the demolition of the bridge at Kerak, the actual destruction carried out had no strategical or even serious tactical value.

For practical purposes, the cutting of the enemy's

¹ A noteworthy instance is that of Nuri Shalaan, the Paramount Sheikh of the Ruwalla who did not actually associate himself with the Arab movement till July 1918, eighteen precious months after the capture of Wejh.

lines of communication must bear some relation to operations in the field. The object of such operations is, needless to say, the destruction of the enemy's main forces. The destruction of his communications is then only of value when the resulting cutting off of supplies seriously hampers his operations in the field to such an extent that his main forces are thereby imperilled. In no single instance did the demolition actually carried out effect this purpose.

To cut communications and allow them to be quickly re-established is false tactics and worse strategy. Nor was it Lawrence's duty to perform this work as political and technical adviser to Feisal. Such work should have been delegated to subordinates, of whom there were several extremely competent for this work, notably Garland, lent by the Sudan Government, of whom little has been heard, but who did splendid work in this connection.

Thus material, money, time, and lives were frittered away on secondary objectives instead of being husbanded to be used at a given time, in achieving a success for Arab arms worthy of their patriotism and in proportion to the lavish expenditure of money and other material assistance they were provided with. This inaction was the more reprehensible since the Turks, by their dogged persistence, successfully neutralized all the great advantages the Arabs possessed, namely, the most generous supplies, immense expenditure of money, adequate resources in man power, complete freedom of action, which should have enabled them to strike when and where they would, a whole country in sympathy with their aims, complete mastery of the sea coast through naval supremacy, and not least, a powerful British

army hammering away at the Turks till their armies were destroyed.

The causes of this tragic failure on the Arabs' part will be dealt with later. In anticipation, it should, however, be mentioned that just as the Arabs failed to achieve any substantial success on their own account in 1917 and at the beginning of 1918, so, in that critical year, they failed to give any such assistance to the British Army as it had a right to expect, in view of the tremendous sacrifices made on behalf of the Arabs by that Army and the British nation.

So it came about, that after the capture of Al Wejh, months of precious time were wasted. The only exception being that Akaba was taken in a most round-about and quite unnecessary manner, as has been already stated.

It is worth noting that a joint effort by sea and land would have reduced Akaba as easily as Al Wejh had been—in which case great loss of time would have been saved. Feisal's troops, or a strong contingent of them, could have been transported by sea and landed when and where desired. The armed ships would have held the Turks from the sea, while the Arabs attacked an "exposed" rear. Why, then, we ask ourselves, was it necessary for Lawrence to undertake its capture by the queer, lone, and almost secretive method adopted?

Lawrence certainly gives us no clue to the riddle. Was it for the same reasons which prevented Feisal from arriving at Al Wejh in time; and which forbade the joint plan for the attack on Medain Saleh being put into execution?

In any case, we can but deplore the fact that the British and Arab forces were denied an opportunity

of co-operating ; still more that the queer idiosyncrasies of an individual were permitted to hamper fruitful action and to stultify important issues.

CHAPTER XI

FALSE FREEDOM

IN the late summer of 1917, Sir Mark Sykes and Monsieur Picot, the French signatory of the Sykes-Picot Treaty, came out to Egypt. Being in Cairo at the time, I implored Sir Mark Sykes to lend his full influence to the formation of an Arab Legion, which would give the movement a truly national character, which till then it had totally lacked. The Legion was to consist of Arab ex-officers and men, taken prisoner, and then in the prisoner-of-war camps in Egypt, and of recruits drawn from all parts of Arabia. It was to be staffed by British and French officers, and to be organized in two full divisions. We had long talks on the subject, and I explained how disjointed the whole Arab movement was, how great the need for a pivot, round which it would revolve in its full strength, and expressed the hope that a striking force, possessing the necessary enthusiasm, would thus be created which might play a serious rôle on the right flank of the British Army. Sir Mark became enthusiastic over its formation.

The War Office, on learning the object of the Legion's formation, gave its consent and promised the money and material to equip it. The Sudan Government was to supply the uniforms and I was given the authority to visit the prisoner-of-war camps to recruit the necessary officers.

I therefore visited the camps and explained fully to the officers and men the objects we had in mind, and a large number immediately offered themselves and were at once liberated.

A committee was chosen from among the officers to assist with their advice, for there were a thousand details to be seen to, and we met daily to deal with matters connected with the Legion's formation.

Amongst other things, a drill book was necessary, and it was determined that this should be in Arabic. So far, they had been instructed in Turkish, and all the words of command to which they were used were in that language. As there were, in many instances, no suitable military terms in Arabic, we had to evolve them and, to assist us, we called in the most learned Ulemas¹ of Cairo. The Koran was taken as the provider of the necessary words. For instance, the star has a separate Arabic name for the four points which it is supposed to possess. These names we adapted to the advance, rear and right and left flank guards of an army.

Soon, certain difficulties of a different nature arose. Shut up in the prisoner-of-war camps, the officers had small opportunity of learning of political developments—at liberty, they were free to mix with the Syrian committee under Doctor Sharbanda, and other committees which had been working for Arab independence since before the war, and whose members had now taken refuge in Cairo.

As a result, they soon heard rumours of a Sykes-Picot Treaty, which has already been mentioned. Its exact terms at the time were not known to them, but enough had leaked out to cause the Arab Nationalists considerable concern.

¹ Religious teachers.

A deputation then called upon me one day at the Arab Bureau. There were sixteen of them, for their spokesmen needed, it seemed, a considerable moral support in what he had to say, and indeed, his message was serious enough.

"You have asked us," he said, "to join the Arab Legion and fight the Turks, in whose army we were, till recently, officers. We are willing to risk being hung by the Turks, for that will be our fate if captured; we are willing to have our homes destroyed, our women ill-treated, perhaps slain, and our children likewise slain or taken away. All these things we will endure if you will assure us that we are fighting for the true independence of our country. If you are unable to give us this assurance, then let us go back to our prison camps, for we will not suffer these things, except for our independence."

I was in entire sympathy with the attitude which they had adopted; I felt, and to this day I have had no reason to change my opinion, that their plea was a perfectly reasonable and just one. One could not expect these men to sacrifice for their ideals everything which life holds sacred only to be rewarded with a false freedom. I told them, however, that I needed time to consider this matter and my reply, and that I would summon them in a day or two, and with that promise, I dismissed them.

I passed an anxious time. The question they had raised affected the whole Arab movement. Whatever misunderstandings there might be between the British Government and King Hussein regarding territories which, he claimed, should pass automatically into Arab hands, there could be no possible doubt that when the Arabs rose, they did so to recover Arabia—the whole of Arabia—from the

Turks, in order that it might enjoy an Arab independence. More important still, every Arab of Arabia thought only of that day which would bring freedom to their different countries—Syrians and Mesopotamians—not less than those of the Hedjaz. There is no doubt, too, that they firmly believed that they were fighting for that ideal. They certainly were not fighting as mercenaries in a foreign army. Why, then, should they sacrifice their lives in order to hand over their countries to another foreign power in exchange for the Turks ?

I could see no way of reconciling what I knew to be the future of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia with Arab claims. Moreover, I foresaw a great danger and one with which, under existing circumstances, I was not prepared to associate myself.

The Arabs, as had been stated above, were in no doubt that they were fighting for the freedom of Arab countries. Although their suspicions led them near to the truth, yet they had really such implicit faith in the Allies and Great Britain in particular, that their faith was unshaken and the rumours were treated simply as rumours. That being so, I was convinced that when the facts became known, it would prove a severe shock to Arab feeling ; that there would possibly be a dangerous reaction, and that in any case, we should be accused of having broken faith with them and betrayed them.

Sir Mark Sykes had been on a visit down the Red Sea, but luckily, was expected to return that night. I sent an urgent message for him at his hotel, telling him I would like to see him at once. About midnight I was awakened by a messenger who gave me a note from him, asking me to come round at 8 a.m. the next morning and have breakfast with him.

I found him, as usual, full of good spirits and highly entertaining in describing the meeting he had had with King Hussein. He broke off abruptly and said: "Well, what's the trouble?"

"You must get someone else to run this Legion," I said, "for I won't." He sprang up as if he had been stung by a wasp, overturning his chair.

"Impossible! Impossible!" he bellowed. "I can't get anybody to help me. Why won't you carry on?"

I explained to him frankly, and bluntly, I am afraid, all that I have just described and ended by saying that I would not be numbered among those who would be accused of want of faith.

We argued hotly, Sir Mark stumping wildly back and forth, as was his custom when agitated, myself still seated, my porridge getting cold, and addressing my remarks more often than not to his back.

Sir Mark could never be angry for long. He suddenly burst into a hearty laugh and stood over me, his boyish, smiling face looking down into mine.

"You are an obstinate beggar," he said, "what do you want to do?"

"I want you to tell these people the truth," I answered gravely.

"Well, they *are* fighting for their independence, are they not?" he asked.

"Are the Syrians to be independent, or the men from Nablus, or from Baghdad?" I asked. He looked serious, but for some time made no reply.

"Well," he said at length, "I will do as you ask me to do and tell them the truth."

He then sat down and we finished our breakfast, after which he told me to call a meeting of all the officers, and when they were assembled, he spoke to

them very frankly, and, without disclosing the full intentions of the Allies, he made the position abundantly clear. He said one very significant thing, namely, that the future of the Arab peoples from that day onwards, lay in their own hands, meaning that if they had the will, they had the power to shape their destinies.

On the whole, I was content. Sir Mark Sykes was in a most difficult position. He had no power to make any declaration. That was the province of the British Government. He was not in a position to disclose matters, which were, for very important reasons, secret, and he took a courageous step to go as far as he did and, above all, he went as near the truth as he was justified in going, and I and the Arab officers had to be content.

So we "carried on," but after a few days, there was further trouble. Only one of them attended the usual committee meeting. I asked him the reason; after a lot of beating about the bush, I got the truth from him. They were divided, it appeared, into two camps; one half accused the other of betraying their countries to England and France. "You are going to fight for England and France!" said the extremist element, "we will have none of it and we are going back behind the barbed wire."

I sent my informant away with a definite order for them all to attend me in two hours time. They came reluctantly and sullenly.

When they were all assembled, I asked them why they had not attended the meeting as arranged. I reminded them that they were officers and therefore bound to obedience. They glared at each other but gave no reply.

"All right, I myself will tell you why you did not

come," I said, and I repeated what I had been told.

They neither denied the truth of the statement, nor affirmed it. So I continued with these words :

" You are Arab officers and patriots, or you call yourselves patriots. You are about to fight for the independence of your country. Up in the heavens, shining with but faint brilliance, is a new star. It is at present very small, but one day, God willing, it will develop into a sun.

" That star is the star of your new-born independence, but *you*," and I snapped the words out, " with your silly bickerings and quarrels, are stirring up such dirt and dust, that the star's faint light is hidden, and if you continue in this manner, its light will fade for ever."

The metaphor was at once appreciated and they broke into involuntary applause, so that my anger was cooled by the unexpectedness of it, for I had spoken in great heat, but sincerely. They began to chatter together noisily, but I silenced them, for I had something more to say, so that we might finish with the business, once and for all.

" That you have started along the road of your national independence, neither you nor I, nor anyone else, has any doubt. Consider then ! Is it better to go one kilometre, even one short kilometre, along that road in safety and take no backward step, or, is it wiser, without preparation for the difficult journey, to rush headlong, taking no heed of the dangers which beset you, for forty kilometres, only to be flung back, through your impetuosity, to the place marked servitude, from which you started ? "

This little speech was followed by a profound

silence, as impressive as had been the applause; but from that day, I had no further trouble and they were keen, hard working, and loyal.

A few days later, I was working late in my room in the Arab Bureau, when Sir Mark strode in, and without preamble, said: "Your responsibilities have doubled, I am leaving at once for Alexandria to embark on a cruiser for Tarantum, I am going home and you must carry on—Good-bye." And he left me, gazing at a sheet of notes on the Arab Legion with unseeing eyes, for I was thoroughly disheartened at the manner of his going thus, without a word of warning.

"Carry on," he had said. "How?" I asked myself. I was nobody's child, as the expression is. I had no appointment in Cairo, no authority. I was regarded as an alien. I had really no chief. It was an intolerable and impossible position. I had no more power to "carry on" than anybody would have, had he been dragged in from the street and dumped down in my place and given the same command. But Sir Mark Sykes, so used to authority, so influential, so impetuous, thought of none of these things.

With Sir Mark's departure, it soon became evident to me that the original scheme for the creation and employment of the Arab Legion was being very poorly supported. Such reinforcements of trained personnel as were forthcoming were welcomed in a fashion, but any serious attempt to build up a striking force as a trained unit found little favour and many difficulties were placed in the way of its creation. Lawrence, especially, who all through preferred to play the game in his own fashion, and was not too partial to ideas, the execution of which might

interfere with his own conduct of affairs, was only too obviously opposed to it.

It so happened that an urgent appeal was sent out in October 1917 by the Indian authorities, for officers of the Indian Army, employed elsewhere, to rejoin their depleted units in France. In view of the fact that I was now in a position to do very little to help the Arab revolt, or influence matters in any way, and since I considered that it was definitely committed to a line of action or rather inaction, with which I had little sympathy, I responded to the appeal from France and rejoined my regiment. The battles round Cambrai came almost as a boon to help me to forget my disappointment.

CHAPTER XII

L A W R E N C E

THE course of the Hedjaz revolt has been fully set forth in Lawrence's book, *Revolt in the Desert*, but his book is more a personal narrative, recounting the part he himself played, than a historical survey of the movement. It describes the author's own actions and explains his reasons, often contradictory, for their performance in preference to others, without attempting an elucidation of the Arab point of view. It gives no answer to the natural questions as to why the *Arab* leaders stood aside from the direction of their own revolt, and played a subordinate rôle, nor why that enterprise, although promising so much, achieved so little, when the opportunities offered for effective action, and the means provided for its performance, were so ample.

But an event of the nature of this revolt has a deeper significance for us than a purely personal one ; its effects have been felt far beyond the sphere of the revolt itself. It has resulted in reactions which have caused the modification of the policies of two great European Powers. It has had no small share in influencing the post-war attitude of the Oriental countries of the Middle East towards the European nations, and not least, it has brought about fundamental changes in the mental outlook of the people of the whole of Arabia.

How few realize the lavish generosity and self-sacrifice of the British people, who supplied the Arabs at a time when Britain could least afford it with millions in money, vast quantities of stores, thousands of rifles, an almost unlimited supply of ammunition and a large quantity of machine-guns. Small credit has been given to Britain for the considerable number of merchant vessels constantly employed in supplying the Arabs' needs, when the sinking of British ships was causing the most intense anxiety to the Cabinet, or for placing at their disposal a large number of armed vessels and lending them some of her best officers¹ and men to assist them in the field. The sum-total of Britain's contribution to the Arab cause in material alone deserves better recognition than it has received. Entailing, as has been said, no small sacrifice on the part of the British people, it was worthy of a better return from the Arabs, than inertia in war and rebellion against their benefactors when victory was gained.

Seldom has a force had greater liberty of action or greater security than had the Arab army during this period, for while its rear was made secure by the Naval forces in the Red Sea during the initial stages of the campaign, its left flank was equally secured by the British armies in Palestine, when events took it farther north. Its right flank rested on the open desert and was offered no menace. The Arab commanders could select the point for an attack and choose the time for launching it, and, when inactive, were able to abide in perfect security, free from any prospect of aggression. Possessing a

¹ "In Cairo, where I spent four days, our affairs were now far from haphazard. Allenby's smile had given us staff. We had supply officers, a shipping expert, an ordnance expert, an intelligence branch." *Revolt in the Desert*, page 224.



LAWRENCE (SECOND FROM THE LEFT),
COL. CYRIL WILSON (ON THE RIGHT),
TAKING COUNSEL AT YENBO.



great mobility, compared with the Turk, who was anchored to the railway, they could concentrate unexpectedly on the weakest point.

On the other hand, opposed to all these great advantages, it must in fairness be stated that the Arab leaders were handicapped by a limited artillery, the difficulty of the transport of supplies and the independent nature of the tribesmen. Nevertheless, even these difficulties were greatly minimized, especially during the concluding stages of the campaign.

We have then to consider what the Arab forces actually performed and to judge whether, weighing the advantages with the disadvantages, they justified themselves as a national force. For this purpose, we may disregard the numerous attacks on the railway, for, as explained in a previous chapter, these cannot be considered as serious military actions, however much they may have caused temporary annoyance to the Turkish command. Moreover, only comparatively small numbers were engaged in such activities, so we cannot regard them as anything but minor operations.

As after the taking of Wejh in January, 1917, Medina offered a clear and imperative objective, so in April, 1918, fifteen months later, the capture of Maan, which constituted the extreme left flank of the Turkish armies opposed to Allenby, offered an opportunity of performing a service of real military value to the Arab cause and to the Palestine campaign. An attempt was indeed made under Jaafer Pasha's leadership. It failed, and was not repeated.

It failed, mainly because after the taking of the Turkish posts of Djerdun in the north and Shahm and Mudow-wara in the south, the full force of the Arab strength was not concentrated against it, and,

after the first rebuff, railway destruction became once more the vogue. Indeed, we are forced to the conclusion that these raids on the railway were employed to convey the idea of action and to distract public attention from the lack of real endeavour. No sooner was a raid undertaken than in some mysterious manner the performance was advertised to the whole world far more speedily than actions of infinitely greater importance in other spheres. Details were provided which surrounded these stunt actions with a romance and mystery quite out of proportion to their true worth, and while it would be unjust to deny the skill and courage with which they were executed, those taking part in them were advertised far beyond the merits of the work. The outcome was that the British people and the British Government itself, were, by these episodes, blinded to the realities of the Arabian situation.

Between the failure of the attack on Maan in April 1918 and September in the same year, General Allenby was completing his preparations for the battle which was destined to destroy the Turkish armies facing him. It was the crisis of the campaign. Now, if ever, it might be expected that the Arab force would contribute something substantial to the common cause. Now if ever, sacrifice became a duty. Opportunity was not lacking, the means were available.

Once more the Arab forces were offered another objective, the taking of which would have proved their worth, and contributed something of vital importance to the British army. That objective was Deraa, the important railway junction, where the Damascus-Medina line joins the line from Haifa. This important place was the nerve centre of the

Turkish armies, was the place into which, when General Allenby asked Lawrence why he required two thousand transport camels, which were available, yet sorely needed by the British forces, the latter replied, "To put a thousand men into Deraa, any day you please." For this "regal" gift of unlimited mobility, "The Arabs could now win their war where and when they liked." A place where, if it was held for a short while, "We should strangle the Turkish armies." Yet, on the eve of the battle, which was to seal the fate of the Turks, when "Even the magistrates of Deraa came to open to us their town," Lawrence refused to enter the place; for "if the ruin of the Turkish army came but slowly, we might be forced out again," he says.

The failure of the Arab forces to occupy, or even to make the attempt to occupy, Deraa at this particular juncture was a reproach on the whole enterprise, and had the force been under the command of a British general who so failed in his duty, he would have been censured, and rightly so.

Even later, when a beaten and demoralized Turkish army was retreating northward to Deraa, where if anywhere, it might have rallied and offered a further resistance to the British and thus, perhaps, have jeopardized the victory almost gained, where, in any case, even its temporary retention by the Turks would have caused the additional and unnecessary loss of thousands of valuable lives, the Arab forces were held back. On the Arab side, a well-equipped army, well led, apparently full of enthusiasm, with its future at stake, hung back from occupying an undefended town because a defeated and demoralized force *might* have driven it out !

The Arabs went on with their futile railway destruction, when they should have flung themselves into the fight and, if necessary, sacrificed half their force to complete the Turkish rout, an operation which would have made railway demolition unnecessary ; but not till Deraa was empty, did Lawrence, racing ahead of Nuri Bey and his men, enter the town *alone*, so that even the small credit of being the first to occupy the city was denied the Arab leaders, as later on the pride of entry into Damascus was filched from the British army, whose bitter sacrifices had made that entry possible, and earned it the prior right.

Furthermore, not till the remnant of the Turkish army, broken, wearied and demoralized, straggled north, did this "national army" fling itself like wolves upon it, and lend their aid to its inevitable destruction.

From Suez to Aleppo, thousands of the Empire's sons sleep their last sleep—Did they die so that Lawrence might ride alone into Deraa, so that he and Feisal might receive ovations in Damascus? Lawrence's sneering gibes at General Barrow and his men, with the sweat of battle still on them, at the outskirts of Deraa, are a reproach to the Arab nation, for whom he pretends to speak.

Once again, the Arab force hung back from the performance of its duty, so that we wonder what its function really was: wonder what was the cause of this continued lack of determination, this apparent disinclination to suffer casualties, this supineness.

One thing strikes us as extraordinarily significant. On their own initiative, the Arabs won far greater successes; they fought hard and sacrificed themselves

without stint. The writer can himself bear testimony to their natural fighting ability, and where given an objective, to their determination and disregard of loss in attaining it. Later on, against the French in Syria, without support, without artillery, they sacrificed 16,000 of their youth and caused France to make a tremendous effort to regain the ascendancy. Against the British in Mesopotamia, again without support, they created a most critical situation, and, incidentally, hastened the signing of a new treaty.

Therefore, their failure during the War was not due to lack of determination, or to cowardice, or inability to achieve some measure of success, and we have to seek elsewhere for the true causes.

First and foremost, they lacked a real leader. Feisal, charming, courageous, politic as he was, was deprived of the power to call forth that fanaticism necessary in a leader of a national movement. He had not the military capabilities to lead an army. It is true he was willing to perform this duty to the utmost limit of his capacity, but was deprived of his right to make the attempt. He was, it is true, handicapped by having someone to take upon himself all active performances, so that he himself was kept more and more in the background. "Feisal, veiled in his tent, maintained incessantly the teaching and preaching of his Arab movement," as Lawrence expresses it.

I greatly doubt whether, ever before, in the course of Arab history, an Arab leader has remained "veiled in his tent," while his followers were engaged in the field; certainly, he has never delegated to a foreigner, the whole conduct of affairs. The Arabs are a people to whom an active, fiery leader is an

essential to success. From the time of Suleiman and Abdul Rahman to more modern times, when the Mahdi led his troops in person, or to our own day, when Abdul Hafiz opposed the French and Spanish in Morocco, when Al Atrash in Syria led his forlorn hope against the massed might of France and when Ibn Sa'ud, throughout his career, personally conducted his campaign, the Arab leaders have led the way and have gained the most brilliant successes. The Arabs, moreover, are a people who are swayed by material results, and there is little doubt that if Feisal had gained some noteworthy success by his own leadership, he would have achieved for the Arab cause in a short while infinitely more than he ever attained during the weary months of his veiled seclusion.

Lawrence was a mixed blessing to the movement. He was given a rôle vouchsafed to few. He had a unique command, where his word was law, his movements and actions uncontrolled. His personal qualities were sufficient. He had a good knowledge of the Arabs, a fair knowledge of their language and dialects, power of endurance which few possessed, a courage beyond all question and a keen, perhaps too keen, a brain. He had eventually the most ungrudging support of the British generals in the field, the authorities in Cairo, and the Government in England. But he was not capable of leading the movement, for it was not his to lead, and he failed, quite naturally, to instil into the Arabs the necessary enthusiasm which could only have been fired by a man of their own race. In the first place he attempted to delegate to himself all action, both military and political. It was, alike, impossible and unjustifiable. Either he was a leader of demolition parties, in which case,

Feisal and Jaafar Pasha should have personally organized the army and led it in the field, or he was a general in which case railway destruction was not within his province, or he was Feisal's political adviser, and liaison officer with the British, in which case his place was by the side of his chief.

He attempted to combine all these rôles, was jealous of another assuming one of them, and consequently failed to attain either his own ambitions or those of the people whose destiny was entrusted to his care.

He would set out on a raid, which ate up valuable time and, during his absence, the whole movement stagnated, since executive action was vested in himself. He thereby created a situation in which nothing could be done or, indeed, was done except through himself, and involuntarily the Arabs became subservient to his whims and entirely lost the power of thinking, planning and acting for themselves. The result was that such credit as was to be gained was a personal one. They brought renown on Lawrence, and the Arabs became mere shadowy phantoms, hardly seen beyond the glare, which shone on himself and, in a lesser degree, on Feisal.

Sir Mark Sykes had hinted to the Arab officers in Cairo, that their destiny lay in their own hands. He was right. There was only one solution of the political situation, brought about by the Sykes-Picot Treaty. It was that the Arab army should become a living, representative, national force, thus demonstrating national unity, and capable of achieving in the field results which would have given the Arab peoples a strong claim for special recognition at the Peace Conference; for unless it could have been shown that the Arabs were a united people,

politically and militarily, and capable, there was small chance of their claims being recognized. Instead of an Arab army marching as a unit into Damascus with their British comrades, Lawrence committed one of the greatest political blunders of the War, by rushing Feisal into the Syrian capital with only a few Bedouins to support him. Only a vital political necessity would have justified his taking so serious a step, but such a necessity was entirely lacking. The result was that the French considered it an attempt to rush their claim and set up a British protégé in Syria. The ill-advised show of resistance Feisal put up to the French entry hardened their attitude towards the Syrian people, and was, in no small measure, responsible for the disasters which later overwhelmed them. Moreover, Feisal's officers, deprived of those posts in Syria, which they were deceived into believing would be theirs, and unable to achieve anything against the French, transferred themselves to Mesopotamia, which they kindled to a revolt for which there was neither necessity nor justification.

Had the Arabs been afforded the opportunity, which they fully merited, and were capable of performing, of creating their National Army, it would have been for the benefit of both France and England, for it was largely due to a mutual fear on both sides that one or the other would obtain a preponderating influence in the face of divided Arabia, which resulted in French action in Syria and British policy in Mesopotamia. The formation of the Arab Legion described in the previous chapter, was an attempt to give the movement the chance of salvation. It was cast aside.

It may be argued that unanimity of political aims

and objects could never have been obtained. That argument cannot be proved since no attempt was made to put it to the test. But the greatest disservice was done by alienating the British and the Arab, instead of fostering between them feelings of mutual confidence and impressing upon the Arabs what was indeed the truth, that whatever liberty they could look to in the future, could only be achieved by British good-will. Instead, feelings of distrust were cultivated and encouraged.

“ In return we strove to keep self-assertion within the bonds of political necessity. On all Arabs we impressed that these Indian troops were guests.” So Lawrence describes it, when the blood of the enemy was still warm upon the ground, thus enthroning arrogance, when, on so great an occasion, comradeship and good-will should have prevailed, an attitude which clearly demonstrated his total lack of political sense. For if Feisal was to be installed as King in Damascus, and his governors in the provinces, surely it was obvious that that could not be done save with the support of the British Government. How essential, therefore, when the time came, when the fall of the city could be reckoned on, that a definite understanding between the British Government and Feisal should have been arrived at before that event took place. The precipitancy shown in taking so important a step clearly showed that it was inspired by one of two motives—either to force a situation on the French by presenting them with a *fait accompli*, or out of blind vanity. Had Feisal marched into Damascus by the side of Allenby, whatever the final outcome of the fate of Syria might have been, at least the Arab nation would have known, as they were justified in knowing,

that Britain sought their welfare. He would have done so as the ally of Britain, and not, as he did, as the self-appointed champion of the Syrian cause in rivalry to France. To set up Feisal's Liliptian Government in Damascus, in defiance of the French, was nothing more than a betrayal of British and Arab interests. In the end Feisal was robbed of dignity and only recovered it in a measure later when, with British good-will, he was elected King of Irak.

Now, years afterwards, circumstances are bringing about a solution of the problems which perplexed us in those stricken days, a solution which might have been reached at the conclusion of the War; but which is now being obtained after much ill-feeling which it has taken long to overcome. Gradually the traditional friendship between the two peoples is being restored, but even to-day there lurks behind the curtain of the Arab minds the mistrust which was engendered in those times.

PART II

CHAPTER I

A CHANGE OF SCENE

THE entry of Feisal into Damascus marked the end of an episode. But while the events already recorded were taking place in the western border of Arabia, affairs of greater importance were happening in two other spheres—Mesopotamia and Nedjd.

Chance brought me into close contact with those other areas, where conditions from the Arab point of view were far different to those existing in the Hedjaz, at the commencement of the revolt, and later in Palestine and Syria. In the western area, Arab aspirations were localized and subordinated to the leadership of a British officer, who attempted to merge his personality into that of an Arab leader, with the consequences that Arab endeavour became stifled, and the national aspect of the movement became diffused by the ambitions and hopes of those connected with it—in other words, the movement lost its individuality and momentum.

In Mesopotamia the Arabs were impotent to venture anything on their own behalf in view of the fact that the Turkish forces, until they were driven back, prevented any kind of attempt at revolt; nor had the Arabs in this sphere a leader capable of truly representing the Arab cause. As the British forces gradually compelled the retirement of the Turks, the country was administered by British

officers, assisted by local Arabs of standing, so that a "partnership" was formed, and the movement became linked to an ally.

The Arab population of Mesopotamia was, however, no less imbued with the desire for freedom than that of the west, but it was incapable of expressing it as a national sentiment owing to the rivalries and jealousies existing between the different classes of the province, and to the lack of a leader capable of investing in himself the hopes and aspirations of the community.

Hatred of the Turk was a common bond, and a belief that in Great Britain lay their deliverance was almost universally accepted. This friendship, trust, and reliance on Britain as their deliverer, was, unfortunately, wrongly interpreted by those responsible for British-Arabian policy. They conceived these sentiments to indicate an Arab wish for British *rule*, whereas they were the expression of a passionate desire for independence and, strange as it may seem, it was the British people, who, although woefully ignorant of Arabian affairs, instinctively judged aright and handed to the Arab peoples of Mesopotamia their Charter of Freedom. That, however, was to come later; meantime, after many blunders, but with unshakable determination, the British drove back the Turkish forces by blood-soaked miles; nor, with the exception of the first attempt to capture Baghdad, which ended with the surrender of General Townshend's force at Kut, did they relinquish what they had so hardly won. As the tide of battle receded, the land reclaimed from the Turks was organized and administered, first by Sir Percy Cox, and later by Sir Arnold Wilson, on the British model of Colonial administration, except

that a greater measure of co-operation with all classes of the community was aimed at.

It was a stupendous task magnificently performed. Hardly had the Turks retreated ten miles, than those ten miles, so recently the scene of carnage and destruction, were converted into an area of peace, and daily increasing happiness and prosperity. The plough literally followed the sword ; railways, roads, telephones, crept after the British rear-guard and spread out to east and west. Hardly had the roar of the guns died away than the clank of the petrol irrigation pumps filled the silence. The peril of men's lives was replaced by security, and weapons were laid aside. British political officers, mostly unaided, took over the administration of towns and large villages, and a population, bewildered by the sudden transition, suddenly realized that centuries of injustice had been swept away overnight.

And yet, like an underground river, the pent-up force of Arab feeling flowed irresistibly on towards its natural outlet. It had welled up in the Hedjaz, only to sink back once more to its unfathomable depths. An outlet was dug for it in Mesopotamia, and it seemed to cover the land in increasing volume, and then—well, the following chapters will tell their own story.

There are many ways of attempting to convey a true picture of a people, and to describe events ; but, whatever method is adopted, the task is one of no small difficulty.

This book does not pretend to give a detailed historical account of the happenings in the widely flung areas of Arabia during the War ; its object is to tell of the aspirations of a people long enslaved.

Like all people, they did not all think alike, nor act always in unison. Some were desperately poor, others immensely rich. Some lived in palaces, others shivered on the bare ground. Some had obeyed all their lives, other lived to command. But whether they were rich or poor, dwellers of the city, tillers of the field, or wanderers over the bleak and inhospitable stretches of the desert, their minds were independent, fiercely so.

The task of the British administration was no light one, especially when it is realized that, for the most part, it was undertaken without force. Where the Turk ruled by the bayonet and the machine gun, the British kept the peace and maintained authority by suasion.

Singly, or in pairs, political officers, often mere boys, were sent to turbulent districts and isolated townships there to take complete charge and to administer justice.

To describe their performances would require many volumes. Varied and complicated were the tasks they had to perform. Each locality presented a different problem. There were the marsh Arabs of the south, lurking in the concealment of their damp reeds; the mountaineers of the north and north-east, proudly defiant in their eerie fastnesses; the nomad of the west constantly changing his abode, ever ready to increase his own poor possessions at the expense of the plodding merchant; the cultivator, with his sickle in his hand and his rifle in his hut; the notables of the cities and the merchants in the suqs, each and every one watching, watching their performances. If one blundered, he lost his life, if another committed an error, a city would revolt, if one bestowed favour unwisely he

created endless complications ; if he withheld it he made an enemy for England, if one blundered in a religious matter he might light the fires of fanaticism.

How then to convey a slight impression of their tasks ? By giving a few examples of such problems as were common to all. If the examples chosen are personal ones, they are described, not to bring the writer but the work into prominence. Indeed, in my own particular case, I had one of the easiest districts to administer. Others, most others, had far more difficult work to perform. For some, it was so difficult that they sacrificed their lives, either through sickness, or by an assassin's bullet ; while others still suffer from the strain of those busy days. For what purpose ? So that they might gain renown ? They are unknown, except to a few, their deeds go unrecorded. For ambition's sake ? Most have resumed the walks in life they temporarily abandoned, and pass, often unnoticed, to their office desks.

Moreover, the examples given here have been selected in order to portray the Arab in his various guises and moods. His cunning and his childlike simplicity, his excitability and his calm ; his often ferocious, but always likeable character. But whatever the task, whatever its performance, the political officers had two clear objects in view, the happiness of the people they governed, and the linking of the Arab nation to Great Britain with bonds of friendship and esteem.

They were not responsible for policy, they were merely the servants of the state and the disciples of a great Empire.

CHAPTER II

A. T.

WE all called him A.T. ; we still do. We did not do this from any lack of respect ; the cognomen was the conceit of our affection. Moreover, we had the very greatest admiration for him, and while we received inspiration from his devotion to duty, we envied his almost unparalleled capacity for work, which was possibly only exceeded by the Emperor Napoleon.

He slept in his office, so that even the two or three hours sleep he allowed himself, might, if necessary, be interrupted by the telephone's urgent clamour.

He could attend to three matters simultaneously—read a dispatch, answer the telephone, and carry on a conversation. This is not romancing ; it is a fact, for I witnessed the performance. His quick mind took the shortest route to the essentials of a problem and his active nature rode his thoughts to instant action, making him contemptuous of being dragged by the slow-moving chariot of officialdom, clogged in the ruts of precedent.

His memory was prodigious. On receiving a lengthy report, his eyes would sweep over it for so short a time, that it seemed impossible for him to have mastered its contents ; yet he had not only done so, but could repeat its contents from memory almost verbatim.

He had a fund of humour to enlighten many a heavy situation, and was an excellent mimic.

I remember on one occasion he had received a long report from one of his political officers, who was a clergyman—for even the Church was not exempt from providing those for helping forward the work of reconstruction. This officer had written the report of his activities, by force of habit, like a sermon. A.T. repeated to us the whole contents with the correct clerical intonation.

It was excellently done, and extremely amusing ; but what surprised me at the time was not only his accurate repetition of its contents, but the fact that he remembered the names of every individual mentioned in it, and there were many. Later on he surprised me by his accurate knowledge of the names of all the important men in Kerbela.

In every respect he was a big man. After suffering great hardships, escaping peril, conquering sickness, he, a soldier, was appointed to the chief post of civil administration in Mesopotamia. In the turmoil of war, by Herculean labour, out of the decaying fabric of a Turkish state, he built a stately edifice, and then, when it was near completion, calmly, and without complaint watched its inevitable destruction.

How old was he when he attained this responsible position ? Thirty-five or thirty-seven ? I do not remember.

It does not greatly matter, for in any case, he was born over a hundred years too late. Had he been born at the proper time, several extra thousand square miles would to-day be incorporated in the British Empire.

Britain and the Arabs owe A.T. a debt hardly to be repaid. Britain, because he administered the country according to the very highest traditions of

our race. The Arabs, because, from a mediaeval country he made a modern state, and by subduing the petty jealousies and senseless rivalries of its different sections, led men's minds to work for a common purpose for the good of the new-born state. Thus he made possible their present independence.

We live too near these events to appreciate their true significance. Some day posterity will raise a statue to his memory. But it will be the wrong statue. It will be a statue of Lieut.-Colonel Sir Arnold Wilson, K.C.I.E., etc., suitably clothed and fashioned like the individual now known to the British public.

The man we knew as A.T. was different. As we knew him he was clad in a pair of khaki shorts which exposed a pair of brawny knees, browned by exposure to the extremes of heat and cold; above these a khaki jacket of quite unorthodox shade—but possibly it had been faded by prolonged exposure—covering a broad and solid chest.

Out of a face, marble pale owing to the great strain he was undergoing, his dark and deep-set eyes mirrored the spirit burning within him.

His manner was often brusque and his speech abrupt, but hidden away somewhere behind that faded jacket was a most warm and generous heart, which was forever impelling him to do us unending, but unobtrusive, kindness.

I met him for the first time at lunch, sitting at the head of his long table, which provided lavish hospitality for all and sundry. I felt shy in my new surroundings.

For some time he took no notice of me, then he suddenly turned to me.

"What is your history?" he asked.

I was in the middle of recounting it when he turned abruptly to his neighbour and commenced a conversation with him, taking no further notice of me.

Later he summoned me to his office.

"I have decided to send you to Kubeisa," he said, "it is a small village near Hit on the Tigris, which the Turks are holding. They are using Kubeisa as a depôt for sending arms and money to their sympathizers, and as a rendezvous for their spies. This must be stopped.

"You will have an escort of seven men and should start on Saturday." It was then Monday. "You will find all about it in the office files."

I had no difficulty in finding out all there was to know. It was a small village consisting of some twenty mud houses, double that number of palm trees, and a hundred inhabitants. It could be reached by a track from Falujah.

I did not feel greatly elated at my appointment, and I wondered what I should do with myself among those forty palm trees.

On Friday morning A.T. sent for me. "Are your arrangements completed to go to Kubeisa?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"Do you know how to get there?"

"Yes."

"When do you start?"

"At 6.30 to-morrow morning."

That night, on going up to dress for dinner, I found a note in A.T.'s hand-writing stuck into the frame of my looking-glass.

"Hold fast," it said.

The next morning he sent for me again.

"You are not going to Kubeisa," he said, "I have decided to send you to Kerbela. You had better go to the office and read up all about it." Which I did.

Most men in A.T.'s position would have given me long and detailed instructions regarding policy, and as to what should or should not be done, or deputed one of his staff to do so. For, in its way, Kerbela was an important town of 40,000 inhabitants, and the "capital" of a fair-sized district.

But that was not A.T.'s way.

Having selected you for a certain work, he trusted you completely to perform it. Yes, that was his secret, he trusted you. He knew that you would yourself find out all that there was to know about your work, and so he saved his own so valuable time and that of his staff. He knew, too, that actual experience was the best preceptor.

For our part we knew instinctively that he was our friend, we knew that we had his ungrudging support ; that, no matter what our difficulties were, if need be, he would ease them, and if we unwittingly committed an error he would rectify it, if necessary assuming himself the responsibility for it. In brief, he was not merely our chief, he was our friend, nay more, he was England ! So that if our labour took us where we were isolated and seemingly unprotected, we had no fear, because we, too, were part of England.

The consequence was that we would suffer anything rather than let A.T. down, or add our troubles to his gigantic burden, and, with this knowledge, we ourselves became more self-reliant and self-confident.

A.T. was so big a man that he could acknowledge a fault if he himself committed it, so that he earned what is more valuable than affection, he gained our greatest respect.

After I had been some months in Kerbela, I received an order from the Army authorities to arrest my second police officer, whom they accused of being in the Turkish pay, and send him under escort to Baghdad.

I, knowing him to be innocent, refused, but later, on getting a direct order from the Commander-in-Chief himself, I had no alternative but to obey, which I did after sending a written protest.

A.T. being unaware of the true facts, sent me a telegram in clear, so that it could be read by his and my own subordinates, through whose hands it must inevitably pass, severely rebuking me for allowing action by the military authorities to be taken against an official employed by the Civil Administration.

I was extremely angry to receive so public a rebuke, and wrote a strongly worded protest to A.T., telling him that if he objected to the manner in which I carried out my duties, he could get someone else to perform them.

Back came this telegram sent in clear, so that his subordinates and mine could read it :

“ Being extremely tired after a long and trying journey, I did not make myself fully acquainted with the true facts. You acted perfectly correctly. I was wrong, please forgive me.

“ WILSON.”

CHAPTER III

IN CIVILIAN EMPLOY

EARLY the morning following the receipt of my instructions, I started on my journey to Kerbela to take up my new duties. I felt anxious, knowing my unfitness for the work ahead. I tried to visualize something of its nature and I speculated on situations which might arise, and which my imagination conjured up in disturbing forms, so that I did not note the streets or those who traversed them; but the sudden rattle of our car on the planks of the swinging bridge of boats, which links Baghdad with its suburb on the western bank of the Tigris, brought my mind back with a snap to my surroundings.

I noted the placid flowing river reflecting the coming day, a flock of snow-white pigeons which swooped down within a foot of its surface and then rose again in rapturous flight, and a whirring of wings, till, rising above the houses which lined the banks, the rising sun turned them into shooting streaks of gold and I envied them their joyous freedom, only to feel ashamed at my own unmanly misgivings.

On a far bank we met the incoming stream of traffic, conveying supplies of fruit and vegetables, gathered at fresh dawn, for the city's provisioning. On either side of the road coffee stalls were doing a brisk trade and their long benches were filled with

those thawing out of their bodies the morning chill, and the smell of coffee filled the air. Passing these we turned sharply to the south-west, our road hemmed in between two huge derelict canals whose lofty and irregular banks hugged our passage like a double range of hills. At length, crossing one of these channels, we found ourselves on the open plain, which stretched away in a level expanse on every side. The landscape was uninspiring, yet in spite of the unsettled conditions it had a look of peacefulness and prosperity, so that it was difficult to realize that the flood of war had but recently flowed over it. There were patches of emerald green fields, of growing corn interspersed with brown patches of withered grass, on which flocks of black sheep nibbled the sparse grazing. Groups of palm-trees, sprinkled about the plain, indicated where the villages lay nestling in their shade.

Over all, the chill mists of night lay hesitant in the hollows, but the sun's rising warmth coaxed them away, until the whole land stretched before us in clear and sparkling sunlight. The road was not of the best and its ruts were deep, so that our Ford bumped its way along with little comfort to ourselves, and great danger for the case of beer we carried behind. So the miles were left behind till, some short distance after passing over the Hindiyeh barrage, which dams the Euphrates and steals its surplus waters, to spread them far and wide through a chain of canals, I saw far ahead along the road a small mosque, its dome covered with brilliant blue tiles, and in its shade a crowd of men and horses. As I approached nearer I noted among them a British officer. This was Captain Pulley, whom I was relieving and he had brought the sheikhs and a few

notables of the town to this outpost of Kerbela to welcome me.

On his part the welcome was warm and smiling, but the sheikhs regarded me with cold and critical stares, summing up my character, trying to gauge its caprices, on which their future content or unease would depend. Even when Pulley smilingly introduced me to them, no answering expression of warmth lit their features, and their baleful eyes followed me, as I passed from one to another, noting my every gesture.

The introductions completed they all mounted their horses to escort me to Kerbela. They moved at a gallop, some ahead, some behind, and others beside my car so that, to the disgust of my "Tommy" driver, we drove in a thick fog, for the road was nothing but a dusty track.

The younger and more active raced madly, jostling one another, passing and re-passing the car, vieing with each other to exhibit to me their horsemanship whereby they might perchance gain something of my special notice to their later advantage. The older and more stolid followed along in the rear, bouncing heavily on their beasts till, finding the exercise too violent, they straggled far behind.

At length we halted before a tall building with a large gateway, before which a guard of shabana (Arab police) was drawn up in a rugged line. They presented arms, their rifles inclining at every angle save the perpendicular. Their uniform was not impressive; it consisted of a khaki jacket over a linen skirt which was sufficiently far from the ground to display their sandals, from which their bare toes twinkled out. If their appearance was not inspiring, still, they were good, tough-looking

fellows. Indeed, their potency lay, not so much in their military order and the precision of their drill, but in their rifles, which they were ready and capable of using with effect.

The building was to be alike my office and my dwelling place. The gateway opened on to a courtyard, from four sides of which the structure rose up to its flat roof. A broad staircase, interrupted by wide balconies, mounted to the highest floor. From the posts of vantage the balconies afforded, there gazed down on to the courtyard below a number of minor officials and menials, whose curiosity led them to witness the ceremony about to be enacted. The courtyard was filled with a nondescript collection of chairs and benches ranged in disordered array, on which were seated in various postures, the notables of the town—a motley collection of Persians, Arabs, Indians, Turks—some sat easily with becoming dignity, others uncomfortably, being ill-used to such vehicles for repose. As we entered the courtyard all scrambled to their feet. There was much shuffling of bare feet into sandals, discarded by those who had kicked them off in order to sit at greater ease, cross-legged upon their chairs.

I did not feel that our appearance gave us the dignity the occasion demanded. Pulley was smothered from head to feet with a coating of grey dust, and my own eyebrows and moustache were thick with the same substance. At one side of the courtyard stood a table spread with a white cloth, on which was placed a large jug of lemonade and two gaudily-coloured glasses. Here Pulley and I seated ourselves while listening to the speech of welcome delivered by a specially selected orator. It extolled my virtues and, since he was ignorant of me, I

presumed he mentioned the qualities he *hoped* I was possessed of. He praised Pulley for the work he had done for them, and rightly, and he lauded England and expressed their gratitude and thanks, and emphasized their willingness to co-operate for their mutual interests. But their memories were short and these sentiments were soon to be forgotten and suppressed. I briefly replied, after which further introductions were made, Pulley giving me a quietly spoken character sketch of each individual as he was presented. It went something in this wise :

" Mohammed Ali, an important man, very pro-Turkish, watch him. Mohammed Chellabi, Persian, big merchant, one of the best, very pro-English. Sheikh Mohammed, bumptious and conceited, but harmless ; Ahmed Kanoo, filled with his own importance, babbles and a gas-bag, useless. Sheikh Ibrahim, potty. Izzet Beg, a Turk, a good fellow."

When these introductions were completed and we had finished our portion of our sticky and lukewarm lemonade, we rose and formed a procession to visit the Beladiyah, the Town Hall ; for we were assisted by a Town Council composed of certain of the notables of the town and of the sheikhs of the tribes, whom we consulted when the occasion arose, which was seldom, for they proved ill-fitted for their task. We set off four abreast, at the correct pace—not too quickly like men overburdened with anxiety, nor too slowly and pompously, but at a dignified stroll, the more important of us in the van, and the tail of the procession filled with a medley of inquisitive spectators, the general populace fortunately taking small notice of our progress.

The Beladiyah was a single-storeyed, white-

washed building, some thirty feet long, standing upon a plinth. When we entered the room Pulley motioned me to a large armchair and, as I seated myself on it, I became the Hakim¹ of Kerbela.

Simple as these proceedings were, I liked them not. They were alike embarrassing and futile. I could not remember the scores to whom I had been introduced and the strangeness, for me, of the business, left me rather numbed and a little confused. I was glad when Pulley and I, at length alone, sat on the roof at night in the cool breeze and talked of the welfare of the people and how it could best be promoted. And to-day, looking back, I can only feel one real sentiment—how earnestly we all desired, from A.T. downwards, the happiness of those whose welfare had been entrusted to our care by Providence for a few quickly passing years.

¹ Governor of Kerbela.

CHAPTER IV

KERBELA THE RELIGIOUS

CAPTAIN PULLEY remained in Kerbela the following day in order to "hand over" to me his charge.

Twenty-four hours were in reality insufficient for Pulley to inform me of all the secrets of the town and its necessities, but the time snatched impatiently even at this small lingering before he took up his new task. He took his departure when night was yet mingled with the dawn. I watched his going with apprehension, for I no longer had his valuable experience to call upon. That was the last I saw of him, for, like so many others, his life was made forfeit in the Arab cause.

Kerbela is a compact little city, and one like many another in the East, containing, as has been said, 40,000 inhabitants, who live in tight-packed houses which end abruptly, so that the gardens wash the outer ring like an encircling sea, and hardly a stride separates the bricks from flowers and fruit trees.

It is famous as the city near which the battle of Kerbela was fought, and where the prophet's grandson Hussein, so venerated by the Shiah¹, was killed and mutilated by those who denied his claims to their

¹ Mohammedans are divided into two principal and inimical sects—Suni and Shiah. The former claim that the lawful successors of Mahomet were Omar, Abu Bekr and Osman. The latter consider these to be impostors and that the rightful successor of the prophet was Ali, his son-in-law.

allegiance as the rightful successor to the Caliphate. On the anniversary of the martyr's death, the Shiah in their thousands make pilgrimage to the city for a five days' festival. Then at night it becomes a place of wailing. Hundreds of its young men, stripped to the waist, their chests liberally smeared with oil, shine like bronze statues beneath a thousand waving torches as they march in serried ranks through the streets. With tight-clenched fists they thump their chests in unison, so that the dull thuds sound like the beat of massed and muffled drums; in between, they and their escort emit a vibrating moan of dismay which echoes pulsatingly far out into the night; while unceasingly the rhythmic beat of their bare feet harmonises with the deeper and the shriller tones of lament.

In the old days the procession was made hideous by fanatics who, in an intoxicated frenzy, slashed and gashed themselves in cruel manner, inflicting upon their unresisting flesh gaping wounds which their madness, apparently, did not permit them to feel; but this we would not allow, since it was a barbarism ill-fitted for our times.

At intervals during the day's passing, when the Muezzin's quavering voice floated over the city, they crowded into the mosque of Hussein to pray and listen to lengthy sermons. This mosque, containing the remains of him they come to venerate, is famous throughout the Shiah world. Its massive golden dome, flanked by minarets encased with the same metal, towers above the green palms and reflects the golden glory of the setting sun twenty miles distant into the desert, and acts as a fiery beacon to guide the weary traveller to his ease.

Many pilgrims travel hither on their last journey,

and the graveyard of the city is, in consequence, a large one, for pious Shiah's oft express the wish to sleep their last sleep in close proximity to the remains of their beloved martyr. So the corpses are carried, some for many hundreds of miles from Persia, or even from Central Asia, to be interred there. Frequently a donkey will be seen carrying two dead bodies, one balanced on either flank, a gruesome sight, not lessened by the indifference and rough handling of the donkey-driver, who uses his poor burdens as levers to open a way for himself and his beast through the throng.

A close watch had to be kept on these importations, since frequently they brought the scourge of cholera or other diseases with them.

The black-robed priests, sitting in the seclusion and gloom of their cloister-like chambers, receive an endless stream of visitors on these occasions. There are those who come to seek their opinion on a point of Sharah (religious law), and on their interpretations of it their repute largely depends. Their "decisions," written on fresh parchment, or added to an existing document with their seals as witness, are noised abroad and freely quoted as examples to be followed ; so their wisdom is advertised, and by this means they gather "followers" who consider them to be the fount of all learning.

As their devotees multiply, the size of the priests' turbans appears to increase till their necks support so large a burden that it seems a marvel that this vast pile can be upheld by so frail a pillar. Their fees are proportionate to the importance of the matter they are consulted about and, incidentally, to the size of the turban.

They would boast of the number of their following,

quoting figures fantastic. If all the priests told the numbers of their disciples, the world itself would not contain the tally.

Sheikh Hussein, the leading priest of Kerbela, informed me that in India alone three hundred and sixty millions followed his teaching. I reminded him that the total population of India was some three hundred and twenty millions ; of these but sixty millions were Mohammedans, of whom but ten millions were Shiahs, and had he not intended to say "thousands" in place of "millions"? He placed both hands to his turban and, tilting it back, raised it an inch higher on his forehead to give him more room on which to arch his eyebrows, while his thick lips inaudibly muttered the reply he tried to frame, which, however, came not forth. Instead he asked me abruptly regarding the oil for the lamps of the Mosque.

Others come to get their decisions on the division of an inheritance, and here the priests reap most benefit, for, no matter what its nature, the outcome, more often than not, is that the priest pronounces the inheritance to be a dedication to the " Church " which thereby receives the major share, if not the whole portion—and many a widow, by forgery, and many an orphan, by means of a false seal, have been beggared and left helpless. So we waged perpetual war with these rapacious clerics, in an attempt to save these lonely ones their means of living ; yet we seldom triumphed, for all fakes were excellently manufactured and, if we could not definitely prove their falseness, we were made impotent, since matters touching the sacred law lay outside our jurisdiction.

Whilst I was in Kerbela, 200,000 pilgrims visited the city to keep the festival. Each one contributed

something for the satisfaction of his favourite priest ; moreover, on these occasions, the religious laws become greatly relaxed. For a fee corresponding to the status of the applicant, a man may find himself possessed of a divorce and of a temporary wife, or obtain other concessions to ethics to ease his sojourn.

When, however, such convenient deviations from the laws of religion are made, they are accompanied by a display of piety in full keeping with the occasion, and gratitude calls for full recognition of the clerics' broad-minded wisdom.

So Kerbela basks in the just fame of its sanctity. The priesthood flourishes. Its mantle, steeped in ignorance, casts its shadow over knowledge. Its bigotry holds its followers in mediaeval subservience. Its pitiless greed tramples on compassion and leaves misery in its wake.

The priests' conceit convinces them that their position is unassailable : " The Turk may be replaced by Britishers, Britishers by Arabs ; kingdoms may rise and dynasties fall ; war may reap its harvest and rebellion gather its fruits ; but the priesthood will remain unchanged."

Hidden away in the dark recesses of its vaulted chambers, it deems itself protected by the past, to which it is linked by a thousand superstitions. It gleans from the present whatever advantage there is to be gained, and looks to its future with arrogant pride, as immutable.

Nevertheless, almost imperceptibly, the light of progress and truth is penetrating into the souls of men, and the dawn of a great awakening is near at hand.

And, although the British occupation was transient,

its effects will be more and more felt as time passes. The cup of freedom, once tasted, the savour remains. Tolerance, having been experienced, tyranny, even religious tyranny, is doubly felt, so that men will remember those short months in which they regained something of true liberty, and their re-awakening will herald the doom of the Shiah priesthood.

CHAPTER V

THE OWNERSHIP OF A DONKEY

THE legal knowledge we possessed was small, and even that was not acquired by the study of ponderous law books or the enactments of any country, for the study of which our duties gave us no leisure ; but, from a certain knowledge of men and manners, garnered in diverse places we " sensed " the essence of a matter ; and if, on the whole, we had a reputation for dealing justly, that result was due, not to our own shrewdness, but was a gift handed down to us by our ancestors, who have left us this quality as the heritage of our race, which, since the dawn of its history, has ever fought for fair dealing. Our work provided the opportunity to give this instinct play, and our actions were guided by this inherited gift. Moreover, most of us had experience of oriental peoples, and of the Arab in particular. We knew *something* of their mentalities.

The Arab has many qualities which appeal to the Britisher. He has a sense of humour, which he displays even in times of danger, or when undergoing hardships. If, therefore, the position was strained, we loosened it with wit, so that even if that quality was possessed of grimness it was often sufficient to avert a dangerous situation. The Arab has, too, a sense of sportsmanship greatly akin to that of the British schoolboy, and we played upon it if the need arose. He appreciates

greatly any finesse in extricating oneself out of a predicament, even if that finesse is exhibited at his expense. It happens that often a matter becomes a duel of wits. His anger quickly cools. He bears no malice, except in his family vendettas, and it is this latter quality which rewards those set in authority over him for the labour bestowed on managing his affairs—in brief, his qualities eased our task. He lied, of course, if the necessity arose, but he lied like a schoolboy, boastfully and patently, not like an adept. On the other hand, the Persian *always* lied. We knew he lied so the knowledge of that fact saved us the hearing of many witnesses.

When I first took over my duties in Kerbela I sat lonely, for comparatively few came to test my judgment in their affairs, and I marvelled that so many inhabitants had so few complaints. I concluded that possibly they lacked confidence in one little used to dealing with such matters; but, on careful inquiry, it appeared that this was not the reason, but that to reach the “presence” was a costly undertaking; costly, that is, in proportion to the importance of the matter to be dealt with, or the circumstances of the individual desiring to present it.

Quiet talks with various individuals—and we were no respecters of persons—while seated in their gardens and smoking cigarettes and drinking their abominable tea, gradually laid bare the truth. For in these pleasant and unguarded moments we talked as brothers.

It appeared that to pass the Shabana guard at the door of my house cost eight annas, if your means were small, or double that sum if you were a man of wealth and had possessions. But this initial outlay

gave access only to the premises, you had yet to mount two flights of stairs to have the petition presented, and finally to enter the "presence" yourself. The scale increased the nearer you got to your goal. If the case was an important one, considerable additional expenditure was necessary before ever it was laid on the Hakim's table.

Whether the various charges made were those which existed in the times of the Turks, or were enhanced at our coming, I know not, but circumstances compelled us to take on as assistants several of those who had acted in a like capacity under the Turkish régime, so that they were adepts in the art of extortion.

Having pondered this matter, I caused to be constructed a large box, iron-clamped to prevent burglary, and fitted with a noble lock. On the top of the box was a long slit. This box was fixed to the building on a wall which abutted onto the street, and above it was placed the following notice :

"To the people of Kerbela, we hereby give notice that any desirous of placing their case, on whatever matter, before the Governor, or wishing to consult him or seek his assistance, may place their written petitions within this box at no charge to themselves. The box will be opened by the Governor himself every morning."

The box was placed for the first time at noon on a Monday, and at 6.30 a.m. of the Tuesday morning, as promised, I went to clear it. It was so full that some of the petitions could not be properly inserted. It soon became evident that the people of Kerbela were not different to others in the world, but that they had their troubles and grievances, the more so since real and open justice had been denied them

during their lives, and during the lives of their fathers and their fathers' fathers.

In this manner we got into close touch with our people. We learnt to know that a matter of seemingly little importance to us, was a question of life and death to the petitioner, that the priests held the population in thrall, and that they robbed the widow and the orphan and amassed in this manner much money, being utterly indifferent as to whether they obtained it from the rich or from the poor. We learnt of the injustices which had been practised by the Turk, of the generosity and kindness of the people, of their simplicity and yet devilish cunning. We became expert in detecting forgeries, in calligraphy, in ancient deeds. Small wonder, since my wooden box contained, on an average, sixty petitions a day. These were sorted into their various categories, according as to whether they referred to questions of religion, to land, to property, or to personal grievances, and they were dealt with at all times of the night and day as other duties permitted. But we prided ourselves that they were dealt with instantly, unless they were unduly complicated.

After I had been at Kerbela some six months, Mr. Bonham Carter, Chief Judge at Baghdad, came to visit me and, after lunch, he asked me how I was getting on.

"All right, I think," I said.

"Do you have many cases to try?" he asked.

"Sixty cases a day on average."

"Impossible!" he ejaculated in astonishment.

I called my assistant and asked for the case-book in which all petitions were written, which he brought.

"No, no," said Bonham Carter, "if you tell me you have on average sixty cases a day to try, sixty

cases it is. I don't need to see the book ; but it beats me how you get through them. Have you any knowledge of law ? ”

“ None,” I replied.

“ Then how do you manage ? ” he asked.

“ You,” I said, “ are the court of appeal ; how many appeals have you had from Kerbela ? ”

“ None,” he replied, “ and that is the reason I came to see you, for I thought that there must be something wrong ; what do you do in dealing with these cases ? ”

“ I will give you a few instances,” I replied.

“ Two days ago a sheikh came to see me regarding his seed advance.

“ For in order to assist the landowners through the difficulties brought about by war conditions, A. T. Wilson had agreed that grain for sowing should be lent them, and they would repay the grain at harvest time with a certain amount added.

“ This sheikh then had been discussing with me the matter of the seed advance at 5.30 a.m. ; at 9 a.m. there appeared before me a ‘ musquin,’ a poor and ragged individual, who informed me that this very sheikh had stolen his donkey.

“ ‘ As God knows, my only possession.’

“ ‘ Where is the sheikh ? ’ I asked Hamdi.

“ ‘ He is outside,’ he replied.

“ ‘ Then have him in,’ I said.

“ When he entered, behold, it was my friend of the morning’s conversation. I bade him be seated on the ottoman, which he did with an assured smile.

“ ‘ Have you stolen this man’s donkey ? ’ I asked him.

“ He looked at him with burning contempt as if he was some foul insect, and then he turned to me.

“ ‘ By God, no,’ he replied.

“ The poor one, who had wilted under this contemptuous scrutiny, looked still more crestfallen, thinking that, according to precedent, his case was ended. It had just begun.

“ ‘ Where is the donkey ? ’ I inquired.

“ ‘ It is down in the street,’ he replied.

“ ‘ Come,’ I said, rising, ‘ let us look at it.’

“ And signing to Hamdi, my Egyptian assistant, to accompany me, we proceeded down the stairs. On the lower landing was a large blue carpet.

“ ‘ Bring that along,’ I said to Hamdi.

“ ‘ What for ? ’ he asked, astonished.

“ ‘ Never mind,’ I said, ‘ but, when near the gateway to the street, go quickly and cover up the donkey with the carpet.’

“ When we walked out into the bright sunlight, there was the donkey, an indefinable mass, underneath the brilliant carpet, and surrounded by urchins, big and small. Others, attracted by the scene, seeing that something untoward was happening, hurried forward, so that in a few minutes we had a big gathering. Turning to the sheikh, I asked :

“ ‘ Is that your donkey underneath the carpet ? ’

“ ‘ Yes,’ he said.

“ ‘ Then describe it,’ said I.

“ He looked at me blankly. Then he studied the carpet, but it told him nothing, and no words came forth.

“ ‘ What brands has it ? ’ I asked, ‘ since every animal in Mesopotamia is branded.’

“ ‘ This man,’ he replied, waving his hands towards the poor one, ‘ some time ago stole my donkey from me and placed upon it his own marks.’

“ ‘ But what were your marks before he placed his upon it ? The donkey must, indeed, be well covered with marks by now.’

“ Again he looked at me blankly, so I turned to the poor one.

“ ‘ Is that your donkey ? ’ I asked him.

“ ‘ Yes,’ he replied.

“ ‘ Then describe it,’ I said.

“ ‘ Its left ear is slit. Its near foreleg has been fired, three lines like this,’ and with his stick he drew in the dusty road three oblique lines. ‘ And it has been marked thus and like this upon the neck.’ Again he drew in the sand. ‘ And it has a V upon its rump.’

“ We removed the carpet and it was even as he had said.

“ ‘ Remove your donkey,’ I said to him, ‘ and go in peace ! ’

“ He grabbed the rope out of the hand of him who held it, and, assisted by the kindly smacks of some of the onlookers and their encouraging shouts, he departed with a speed surprising, and vanished round the corner escorted by a dozen gleeful urchins. We returned to deal with the next petition.”

CHAPTER VI

THE LOSS OF HALF AN EAR

OUTSIDE the office door, high, piercing voices suddenly made hideous the day's quiet. A gruff male voice shouted "Usqut!" "Shut up!" whereupon the piercing shrillness of the voice passed all human endurance.

Angrily I bad Hamdi bring the culprits before me.

He went without, and almost immediately afterwards the doors were violently thrown apart, and two hideous hags were propelled by not-too-gentle hands into my presence.

Two ancient negresses they were, of awesome aspect, one lacking the top half of her left ear, which was still bleeding from a lacerated wound.

With great difficulty were they kept asunder, and in their ferocity there was little to choose between them. Yet I noticed at once a falsity in their shrilly protests which, I surmised, had been raised even on the "sacred threshold" of the magisterial office to impress myself. Each endeavoured by her vocal efforts to convey, in good time, that *she* was the injured party.

They had, apparently, waited patiently till their turn came to enter the presence, when, simultaneously, this discord broke loose, in order to influence the Hakim's judgment.

My own stern rebuke only silenced one form of

clamour for another of a different kind, but hardly less to be borne.

One that was lacking part of her ear suddenly began to weep in rending sobs. Her rival gazed at her in surprise, not unmixed with admiration, when she too, taking up the challenge, and not to be outdone, added her woeful voice to that of her companion.

A further stern rebuke, more emphatically administered, caused a suspiciously abrupt cessation of these liquid outpourings.

The mutilated one was ordered to speak first.

"Your Excellency, I have a property. To my misfortune this daughter of the devil occupies some land adjoining. Possessing fowls, she allowed these, in spite of my expostulations concerning which I can bring many neighbours to bear witness, to stray upon my land where, scratching holes, they did me much damage. A large flock of these birds having wandered on my property one hour ago I drove them thence; whereupon this shameless one beat me, and threw me on the ground, and in her frenzy bit off the top of my ear, as your honour may see for yourself," and she began again to weep aloud.

"And you?" I asked, turning to the other.

In reply she pulled down her robe, exposing a massive chest, and a shoulder bruised and bleeding.

"Allah requite her for these lies. It is she who, not content with her greater possessions, puts her unclean cooking pots near to the entrance of my home, so that one may with difficulty enter. When I, for the thousandth time, asked her graciously to remove them, she took the most weighty of them and smote me, as your honour may see here," pointing to the bruised shoulder, "and felled me to the

ground, and there, leaping upon me, smote me grievously. In the struggle, rolling over, her ear caught a fragment of the broken vessel, and became slightly scratched. May God witness that this be the truth."

"Go, both of you. I will deal with this matter on the spot. Be present, therefore, at your houses at five o'clock."

At five o'clock, therefore, I rode down to the scene of this Amazonian conflict.

To my surprise I found the "property" to consist of a long grass hut, divided into two portions, a door at either end providing the only apertures. The huts were surrounded by a reed fence, enclosing a compound of beaten and barren mud, twenty yards square, and common to both huts. It was at once obvious that any means of apportioning a just share of this bare yard was completely lacking.

Placing myself roughly in the centre of the huts, I balanced with my eye the mid-way distance, then with my cane I drew a line in the dust, from the edge of the huts and, walking backwards, completed the division when my back struck the fence. The line thus drawn was, in consequence, somewhat irregular, but, pointing to one half, I said to the possessor of chickens:

"See that the birds cross not this line."

And to the possessor of cooking pots:

"Place not your pots beyond this boundary," and I got on my horse and rode away.

A week later I rode thither again, to see if peace was established.

I found the two women seated together, cooking over a common fire, and in place of the shallow scratch made by my cane, a trench a foot deep and

two feet wide, ornamented at intervals by white-washed earthen vessels.

The trench was sinuous, for those who had dug it had faithfully followed the erratic wanderings of my cane. Both women rose as I approached, and grinned cheerfully, giving me hearty welcome.

I congratulated them upon the artistic appearance of the trench. Said the one with half an ear :

“ Many came to see for themselves the boundary line drawn by the Hakim himself, for they scarce believed when we informed them of it, and after a feast in celebration they helped us to dig the trench, as your honour sees it, and as Allah witnesses, it is as your honour traced it.”

CHAPTER VII

THE ZIBILIYA CASE

The Naquib of Baghdad versus the Nawab of Kerbela

THE long-drawn-out legal battle, known as the Zibiliya Case, had been waged over a period of ten years, and was yet at the time of my appointment to Kerbela still undecided.

The strife was between the Naquib of Baghdad, a person of considerable position in Mesopotamia, and the Nawab of Kerbela, a nobleman of no small power in Kerbela and amongst the Indian Moslems. Both owned lands in Kerbela which adjoined each other, being separated by a canal called the "Argieh."

The cause of the trouble was a piece of land which formed a natural depression, about three miles long by one and a half wide, running across the end of the Argieh Canal, to which both personages laid claim.

Now at certain seasons the depression became a lake, by reason of the rains and the overflow from the canal. Then was a truce declared, since the ground that lay under the waters of the lake was of small use to anyone.

But there were also times when the lake dried up, and then the land became a potential Eden of fertility, with its rich, well-irrigated soil. So the trouble would recommence.

Servants of the Naquib would quietly sow wheat at one end of the hollow. Varlets of the Nawab

would approach and sow barley at the other, and so soon as the first green shoots of corn showed themselves above the ground, the legal battle would be resumed with the greatest fury.

The courts would be invaded by both parties armed with deeds, and supporting maps of undisputed authenticity and antiquity.

The Counsel for the Nawab would lay formal protest against the action of the Naquib for causing his servants to plant wheat on his client's land.

"On the contrary, your honour," would declare the Naquib's representative, "I must beg that you constrain and prevent this unlawful trespass on the land of the Naquib. And, further, that you cause the Nawab to remove his crops from off my client's land.

"If your honour would be so good as to glance at this map, you will see for yourself that the Canal of Argieh, which forms the boundary between the estate of the Naquib and that of the Nawab, ran so, although now obliterated by flood and rain; from the point where it enters the debated territory, it did, in fact, flow along the side of the lake away from my client's territory; thereby proving beyond dispute that the ground rightfully belongs to the Naquib."

Up then would rise the other party to prove by deed and map that the end of the canal, although now obliterated by wind and flood, flowed *not*, as learned counsel suggested, across the Nawab's lands, but in precisely the opposite direction; thereby throwing the erstwhile lake indisputably within the boundary of the Naquib's estate.

Unfortunately, shortly after my arrival, there was a drought, and the lake dried up, with the usual consequences; it therefore became my duty to try the case.

Before embarking on a problem which had taxed the wits and proved a considerable source of income to the Turkish legal authorities, I determined to examine the disputed land for myself.

I therefore borrowed a British engineer, with instruments for taking levels, and asked him to make a careful survey of the spot.

We discovered that the lowest part of the depression was only a short distance in direct line from the end of the canal, and several feet lower.

Armed with this vital and illuminating information, I summoned the litigants, or their legal representatives, to appear before me.

The Nawab attended in person, but the Naquib was represented by two lawyers from Baghdad.

These two, encumbered with bundles of paper and fat volumes, sat side by side upon my settee. They reminded me of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, for one was extremely long and emaciated, and the other was short and fat.

After I had served them with coffee and cigarettes I asked them their business.

The fat one, whom I had named Sancho Panza, began to speak with the greatest volubility, glancing sideways now and again at his colleague, who nodded approvingly.

"Honoured sir," said he, "by Chap. Something, Article So-and-So, Section Such-and-Such; and also by the finding of the celebrated Judge Dash in eighteen hundred and blank, I beg leave to submit that the Nawab has no right to present his case before you, neither have you, with regard to this land, any jurisdiction to try the issue."

He was then proceeding to elaborate his case by quoting further precedents with amazing rapidity,

when I raised my hand. He stopped short with an injured look upon his face.

"Gentlemen," I said gravely, "I perceive that you are all labouring under some slight misapprehension. You have not, perhaps, realized that it is not so much a question as to whether the land belongs to your client, or to this gentleman, the Nawab; but rather whether the land does belong, in fact, to me."

Had the prophet Mahomet himself chosen that psychological moment to appear in our midst, his presence could not have caused more dumbfounded amazement than did my words.

That the man deputed by Baghdad to try the case should himself enter the lists as a claimant to the property, passed all bounds of comprehension.

Preserving as magisterial a look as possible in the circumstances, I proceeded to declare the session closed, appointing a specified spot for our next meeting on the following day.

Upon arriving at the rendezvous at the time agreed upon, a place close to the disputed ground, I found a crowd of about forty Arabs awaiting me. I demanded who they were, and on being informed that they were witnesses for the Naquib, I ordered them to betake themselves to an eminence about fifty yards away.

Being then ready to begin, I told the fat lawyer, Sancho Panza, to call his first witness, which he did.

I stopped him as he began to question him, saying that I would myself do the interrogating.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"A farmer," he answered.

"Do you work hard?"

"God knows."

" Do you make much money ? "

" As Allah is my witness, nothing."

" Where do you live ? "

" Yonder," pointing to a small mud dwelling beneath two dusty palms, " as did also my father, and his father's father."

" Tell me, then, does water run uphill or down ? "

He grinned broadly. " Downhill."

" Do you know anything about farming ? " He smiled again.

" Then tell me, which is the lowest part of the land hereabouts ? " He pointed to where, two days before, I had found the lowest part of the depression.

Dismissing him, I called another, who likewise testified that water ran downhill and not up, and that no one but a fool would dig a canal that ran uphill.

When I was about to call another of the forty witnesses, Sancho Panza resignedly asked me to desist, as he evidently did not wish the people whom he had paid to swear that the canal ran up, to come and admit that such a thing was foolish.

" Let us then," I said, " examine the ground for ourselves."

Now the sun had become very hot and the ground had been ploughed up and was baked into hard lumps.

So the lawyers, especially Sancho, began to feel uncomfortable, in spite of the shade of the large white umbrella which he carried.

After some time had been spent in laborious and dusty progress over the hard-baked clods, Sancho Panza cried out to me, where I sat upon my horse, that he would take my word as to which was the high and which was the low ground.

So I set him on my mount and told him to go and refresh himself, and that I would give my decision on the morrow.

Sancho Panza, in spite of the fact that he had spent the interval in bed, was still somewhat tired when he appeared before me the next day.

Addressing the parties once again, I told them that I had confirmed my previous decision.

It was manifest that no canal could have run where either side had claimed. I was convinced that the canal never had run beyond where it now ended. The hollow was therefore outside the boundary of both and the ground was government ground, of which I formally took possession, as the government representative.

Later, when I went up to Baghdad to report my decision, the Naquib asked to see me.

He inquired after my health, he desired God to bless me, he talked of several things ; finally, as an afterthought, he asked me, although he already knew, what was my opinion on a certain Zibiliya Case ?

I told him ; whereat he leant forward and, tapping me on the knee, he said with a wide smile, " You are quite right."

He was a true sportsman if ever there was one.

Later on A.T. telegraphed to me that my finding had been upheld by the Baghdad High Court. He also thanked me at the same time. Indeed, I was undeserving of any such thanks as A.T. had, with his usual kindness, bestowed upon me, for the case was simplicity itself.

The Turks had been handicapped by their code, which made it impossible for them to examine things in the proper setting. They were wrapped

round with *amour propre*, and their dignity prevented so informal an inquiry.

But we, as A.T.'s officers, laboured under no such handicap ; we had absolute freedom of action, and we arrived at our decisions helped by the knowledge of the locality and the people.

Good humour, common sense, local colour and many little things of a like nature helped us to raise truth from the morass of doubt on to the firm ground.

CHAPTER VIII

CHOLERA

My Indian sub-assistant surgeon came into my office and saluted.

"A case of cholera, Sahib, a woman."

"Is there no doubt?"

"None, Sahib."

I turned to Hamdi.

"Telegraph to Baghdad, report cholera, and ask for a British doctor to be sent at once."

I sent for Mohammed Amin, my Chief of Police.

"Issue instructions throughout the city that no bad vegetables or fruit are to be sold on pain of a fine of one hundred rupees, confiscation of the shop's stock, and the closing of the shop."

Next I summoned the Rais al Beladiyeh, Mohammed al Cholabi.

"Double the street cleaners, and keep the city spotlessly clean; issue a notice that should any defile the streets, they will be instantly imprisoned."

To Mohammed Khan, "Prepare emergency beds in the Turkish Hospital, on which I will place a guard."

Drastic action, perhaps, but the lives of my people had to be protected against themselves.

At noon there came by chance General Wilcox, the famous pathologist, on a chance visit. It was his valuable suggestion to mark each case of cholera

upon the map of the city, and as the cases increased, a line of red dots grew, and showed at once the infected area, a street bordering one of the big subsidiary canals. As soon as this was evident, a gang of men was sent to cut the water off entirely by building a dam across the off-take from the main canal, and a forlorn hope, an order issued that all water should be boiled before being drunk or used for cooking.

The cutting off of the water supply from this part of the city was a great hardship, and would entail serious damage to the crops and gardens, but the lives of the people entrusted to my care were of greater value than the fruits of the earth.

A.T., as I knew he would, sent a doctor at once, Captain —, and he arrived in the late afternoon.

He immediately inspected the Turkish Hospital, stated his needs, which we supplied or improvised, and set about the disinfecting of the infected quarters.

He came to me late that night to say that cholera patients refused to go to the hospital, and no inducements on his part could persuade them, or their relatives, to the contrary. So, accompanied by a lantern bearer, I visited them one by one. I sat on the floor by each, and argued and entreated patiently, though I felt like beating them into submission, and finally bribed them with ready cash, which was the most powerful argument of all, so that long after midnight I saw the last of five cases taken to the hospital, but I had to accompany each one thitherward, and stay by them, assuring them of their safety, while the doctor administered his intravenous saline solution. I did not like the operation, and was glad when my duty for the night was done.

At six o'clock each morning, accompanied by Amin Bey, I inspected a quarter of the city to judge of its cleanliness, and to see that my orders were being carried out.

The second day I reached the Main Canal, and to my indignation saw one up to his neck in the water. "Come out of that," I shouted at him, and he came, stark naked and dripping. "Have you not read my orders, that none should bathe in the waters of the canal?"

"I came but last night to the city, and saw and knew of no such orders," he replied.

"And why do you bathe in the city's drinking water?" I asked.

"I suffer from a skin disease and my doctor told me thus to bathe each day."

I told Yamin to find out all about him and report. He reported that the man was a Notable from Hillah, and had been three weeks in Kerbela. I gave him three weeks imprisonment; he helped to cleanse the streets, shovelling the dung and dirt into panniers, carried by donkeys, and none other bathed in the canals.

In a week the cholera had ceased, and the dreaded scourge had claimed but three victims, although many had contracted the disease.

In ten days we were reported clear, and I breathed again. But on the selfsame day came Mohd. Chilabi,¹ his face green with fear.

"The city in is an uproar. Evil men are going about saying that the doctor has shamed the women-folk before his men, and that the cholera was but an excuse for evil deeds."

I hastily called Yamin. "Summon the Biladiyeh

¹ Rais al Beladiah, or "Lord Mayor."

and the Ashraf (notables) of the city, and proclaim by crier that in half an hour the Hakim will attend."

The Biladiyeh, or Town Hall, was a long building raised, as already stated, on a plinth some five feet high, so that it stood above the turgid sea of faces like an island in a sullen sea. When I reached it, it was surrounded by a closely-packed crowd, so, too, the plinth and round the doors, so that I had difficulty in approaching. As I climbed the steps and so became visible to the throng a sullen murmur rippled through the crowd.

When at last I entered the room, I found the members of the Beladiyeh at one end, and down both sides the Ashraf seated, in a double line of chairs. Every inch of its eight barred windows was occupied by the mob, so that they knelt on each other's shoulders, gripping the bars with sweaty hands, and pressed their grimy, black faces as far between the bars as they could get them, in their greed to see what transpired within.

"Throw open the doors," I said, "and let as many from the crowd below enter as the room may hold." So they surged up the steps and filled the room, and I ordered them to sit, which, owing to the press, they could hardly do.

When these arrangements were made, I rose to address them, and as I did so I felt the hostility and the suppressed excitement of this vast and ominously silent crowd.

"Ya ahali Kerbela (Oh! people of Kerbela)," I began, "I will first speak to you as your father, and later as your governor.

"Awalan mithl abukum—First as your father. Cholera is a disease like this," and I described its workings, and how the germs were carried—"Hence

my orders. Forty thousand people there are in Kerbela, and if the fire of cholera once caught firm hold, it would burn you all up, and your wives, and your children. How many in past years have you lost? How many this? Of past years I cannot tell of the hundreds or thousands, but of this year I can inform you that Allah in His mercy has claimed but three, and that this is due to the man you would accuse of evil, to the doctor who laboured day and night that you might live. Since when has an Arab shown ingratitude to his deliverer? Since when has he forgotten the teachings of his religion?"

I shouted my words so that my voice should carry as far as possible, and as I spoke I felt the change in the temper of the mob; it was as if the crowd had breathed a deep sigh and relaxed.

"And now," I said, "I will talk to you as your governor. Fetch forth the first whose wife or daughter was stricken."

A middle-aged man rose. "My daughter," he said, "was struck down."

"Then tell the people of Kerbela what the doctor did to shame your daughter; shout out to them her shame!"

"God forbid that I should say that the doctor shamed my daughter in any manner; on the contrary, he laboured all the night to save her, but God willed that she should die," he said simply. "But so long as I may live, I will remember the doctor with gratitude for his kindness, and noble attempt to save her life."

"Sit down," I said, "and let the next stand forth."

A young man of bold aspect came forward, right up to me, treading heavily on the people seated on the floor. I wondered what he would do. When

almost touching me, he whipped round and faced the crowd.

"My wife was ill, and God gave the doctor strength and wisdom to save her life, and she lives, and is with me now, and every day will I offer prayer for the doctor. Oh, people, I feel shame for you and for myself, so that I can no longer look upon the Hakim and the doctor."

So one by one they stood and testified good. At last I ordered the man who had started the report to stand forth, and I sat down.

"And what have you to tell the people of Kerbela?" I asked. "Have you ought to say against the doctor?"

"Yes," he bellowed, "my wife was ill, and the doctor came with seven men, and shamed her before them all."

I sprang to my feet. "Quidzb" "A lie!" I shouted, and I think my shout was louder than his bellow. "You stand there before the whole city, and the first words to leave your mouth are lies."

The crowd roared with me, hurling upon him curses and abuse.

I pointed to the door, calling upon Amin, "Take him to prison." Amin seized him and began to hustle him towards the door.

But one of the Ashraf rose and asked silence. Amin Bey paused, his hand hard upon the prisoner's shoulder, and his watchful eye roving, lest this interruption might bode evil, but he who had called for silence thanked me in words which could be equalled in no other language, save Arabic, and then said: "And now we have only one request to ask your honour."

"Ask it," I said.

"The man is mad and a fool, send him not to prison, we beg."

"Release him," I ordered Amin, and the man left the room.

I made my way down the room, the people standing respectfully while I did so.

I stood for a moment on the top of the steps, overlooking the crowd.

"People of Kerbela," I said, "may cholera never again visit your city; go in peace," and they departed every man silently.

I stood awhile, looking down on the deserted square, while a strange thought passed through my mind, released from the strain of the last half-hour. It was: "If the common people, their passions excited by an evil tongue, could yet even in the heat of excitement judge between truth and evil, then truth and happiness must one day prevail, and although men's passions are easily roused by an evil report, the flame is sooner or later quenched by the eternal spring of justice."

Indeed, for the remainder of my time in Kerbela, peace reigned, and such happiness as the time permitted was shared by all.

CHAPTER IX

BONFIRES

ON the night of September 22nd I was still hard at it at half-past ten, when Amin Bey, my Chief of Police, came in and saluted.

"Good evening, Amin Bey," I said. "What is it?"

"Your honour, fires are shining all round the city."

"What of it?" I asked.

"They are signal fires to call out the tribesmen, and mean that at dawn they will attack the city," he replied.

"Saddle my horse immediately, and tell Hamdi likewise to get ready. I would see these fires from close quarters."

Amin saluted smartly, and quietly left the room.

I rose from my chair and went on to the roof. At first my eyes could not pierce the night's shadows, but when they got used to the darkness I could see, beyond the sea of palms surrounding the city, a ring of twinkling lights, some so close that I could make out the rise and fall of the flames, others so distant as to appear but as spots of orange light.

The town itself appeared quite normal. A fretful baby squalled on my neighbour's roof, a reed pipe accompanying some singer further off sounded sweetly in the stillness, between the infant's cries.

A dog barked. Otherwise the city slept peacefully beneath its ceiling of myriads of twinkling stars. For five minutes I contemplated the scene, and wondered how it was possible that such peace, and slow, yet sure, returning prosperity could be jeopardized by such folly. Was it really possible? Did these twinkling spots of light really mean that the Government's peace was to be broken, and anarchy let loose, just when friendliness had seemingly been so well established? Well, we would soon know.

I felt rather weary as I went downstairs. All one's efforts seemed so unproductive. Was it possible to curb such turbulent spirits by suasion? Would it not be better to meet force with force, and telegraph to Baghdad for armoured cars, or other aid? I had to decide quickly. I thought of A.T. and the multitudinous calls made upon him, of the military authorities and their more pressing needs, and I decided to attempt my own method first. Yet I knew that if I failed, I would increase A.T.'s difficulties considerably, and make a greater call upon the military if the tribes really got out of hand. Anyway, no time was to be lost, and so I hurried down to the street. There I found Amin Bey and Hamdi already awaiting me.

We quickly mounted and left the town quietly, for I did not want to occasion alarm by my sudden departure, and let those who were unfriendly know that the city was left without its governor.

We had eleven miles to go to the house of Mohsin, the sheikh of the Husseini, which was our objective, so we had no time to lose.

As soon as we were clear of the town we put our horses into a canter, pounding our way on the dusty road, which ran just below the bank of the main

canal. In half an hour we drew rein to breathe our beasts. I dismounted and climbed up the canal bank.

The whole country appeared peaceful and still, but the fires still shone ; indeed, I saw one about half a mile distant suddenly flare up, and against its glare I could see the forms of those who fed it with fresh fuel.

Suddenly, a hundred yards away, on the further bank of the canal, I could make out the shadowy forms of horsemen, riding slowly in our direction, and evidently bound for the same destination.

I quickly slid down the bank and, signalling to my companions, we hastily mounted and trotted quietly on. Luckily the steep banks hid us, and when I deemed that the night had completely covered us from the sharp eyes of the horsemen, and the distance sufficient to deaden the sound of our horses' hoofs, we moved on at a gallop.

Before long, through the gloom I could see Mohsin's white house, half concealed in a palm grove on our right, and we drew rein and approached it quietly, like men whose minds were easy.

On approaching the doorway, we threaded our way among a lot of horses, collected in groups of three or four in charge of individuals. We rode right up to the door, and one who had been sitting rose and asked " men ! " (who ?) " El Hakim " (" The governor "), Amin Bey answered.

I asked him to hold our horses, and I had already arranged with him that if he heard any serious trouble from within, he was to ride at his greatest speed to Museyeb, the next town in charge of a British officer—and report, and ask the Political Officer to inform Baghdad that there was trouble.

Hamdi and I then strode quickly in. I knew

Mohsin's guest-chamber, and we made straight for it. The door stood open, so we walked boldly in. The room was packed, and all rose in evident confusion as we entered. Mohsin nearly forgot to come forward to greet me, as was my due, but I appeared not to notice his confusion.

"The peace of God on you," I said.

"On you be peace," he mumbled.

I found him on the *daïs* at the end of the room, and he motioned me to sit beside him, and as we seated ourselves, the rest did likewise.

The room was the usual long reception room, with whitewashed walls, and gaudily-stained windows. It was ill-lighted, so that those at its farthest end were indistinctly seen.

I noticed that every man was armed with a rifle. Most held them upright on the floor, gripping them in the right hand, others had them lying by their right thighs, for they were squatting cross-legged on the floor. Mohsin, however, had an automatic in his belt, and a curved sword, which he placed across his knees.

When we were all seated, a dead silence ensued, and I could hear the horses stamping outside. Every man's eyes were fixed unblinkingly on Mohsin, and he had his head lowered on his chest, and his eyes concealed under his thick eyebrows.

I waited in silence for the customary question. At last it came, grudgingly:

"Kaif halkum, Zain Inshalla——(How is your circumstance). Good, please Allah?"

I smiled at him as I replied, "Al hamd al Allah—Zain." "Thanks be to Allah, good."

Another long pause, and then I asked him how his harvest had been.

"Indifferent, as times had prevented the full sowing."

A sort of sigh went through the room at this cryptic reply.

"Please God they will improve," I replied.

"Inshallah, please God," he growled politely.

Another long pause. Our conversation could in no sense be called brilliant, but I was playing desperately for time, and I did not mind the awkward pauses. I was preventing him addressing his following, at any rate, and I had to hold them there till dawn, for daylight would advertise their designs, moreover, the heat of their ardour would cool with the passing hours. So the minutes dragged slowly by, long pauses following blunt questions, and equally blunt replies filling in the passing minutes; but I was careful that no remark of mine should inflame them.

Finally at half-past three, when three hours of this play-acting had elapsed, I asked suddenly, after an especially long pause:

"The night is made bright by many fires. The reason?"

The whole floor moved like an incoming wave, as men craned forward, the better to catch Mohsin's reply.

"The nights are cold," Mohsin answered.

"But do men light fires in the open to warm themselves in their houses?" I asked.

"There is much sickness," he mumbled.

"Then please God the sickness will approach no nearer Kerbela," I said sternly, "otherwise I shall recommend many to go into hospital in Baghdad."¹

¹ An allusion well understood—insubordinate and turbulent sheikhs if they refused to submit were sent to Baghdad and there confined.

"Please God, no," said Mohsin fervently, and I detected alarm in his voice. I now became more confident, and felt that I had the situation in hand.

"All men," I said, waving my arm towards the room, "come armed to pay you their respects."

"These are troubled times, and there are dangers on the road."

"I will see that the British Government removes these dangers," I said, "so that all men may pass to and fro in safety."

"Please God," said Mohsin.

"Some of these rifles are very fine. That one there seems good," I said, pointing to the nearest. "May I see it?"

"Let the Governor see it," Mohsin said. He rose and took it from the man, and handed it to me.

I pretended to examine it with interest, and opened the breech and extracted a live cartridge. I expressed astonishment.

"It is very dangerous," I said, looking hard at Mohsin, "to have rifles loaded in a crowded room; it is better the danger be removed," and I closed the breech, and handed the rifle back, but kept the cartridge.

Mohsin clapped his hands, and his servant appeared.

"Gawa !—(Coffee)," he said. And with the offer of hospitality so long delayed, I knew that peace was won.

With the coming of coffee, the whole atmosphere changed. Mohsin smiled and put aside his sword.

Glancing at a stained glass window, I saw that dawn was breaking. I rose and took my departure, and we rode back in the quickly-brightening day.

"My God," said Hamdi, "I would not pass another such night."

"Not to prevent the sickness reaching the people of Kerbela?" I asked.

"No, not for a hundred Kerbelas."

But knowing Hamdi, I knew he lied.

CHAPTER X

THE PRICE OF A LIFE

EARLY one morning, Mohammed 'Amin reported that a man had been slain in a far-off village.

By whom? No man knew. For what? For no apparent reason. The corpse? It still lay where death had overtaken it.

So we rode out to make inquiry—Mohammed 'Amin, Hamdi, my sub-assistant surgeon, and myself.

We rode rapidly, to the great discomfort of the little sub-assistant—he was unused to riding. He bumped about so that at every concussion I expected to see him parted from his mount. His expression was pitiful to see—with his turban over one ear and both hands gripping the front of his saddle, he barely maintained his uneasy perch.

His beast, usually a gentle one, seemed unaccountably restive, as if deliberately seeking to increase the insecurity of its rider by its sudden caprices. I grew suspicious, the laughter in the eyes of Mohammed 'Amin giving me the clue, and looking round suddenly, I caught Hamdi in the act. He was tickling the beast in the ribs with his cane. Thereafter the little man rode easier.

It was atrociously hot, a scorching wind blew, and our road took us over an open plain, which shimmered and danced before us in the heat. At last we found our way impeded by some low sandhills,

and, on topping them, we looked down on a small collection of huts lying beneath a clump of scattered palm-trees, whose long, attenuated trunks, topped with skimpy foliage, produced a mere mockery of shade.

The huts, some twelve in number, were built of reeds covered with thick layers of the same growth. They had been erected in irregular disorder according to the random whims of their builders.

Close by were small patches of ripening barley surrounded by low hedges of dead thorns, sufficient to keep the sheep, of which there were two small flocks, from robbing their owners of this poor means of subsistence ; the crops were so thin and dwarfed, that the hard-baked earth could easily be seen between their scattered stems. There was no need to ask where the tragedy had occurred.

Along one side of the fields ran a narrow footpath, and lying obliquely across it a form was stretched stiffly out upon its face, its arms wide flung ; partly it was covered with a black cloth, on which a swarm of flies were collected. The presence of this poor carcass in no way disturbed the day's routine of the little community. Women were scouring out their cooking pots, two men were building a hut, others passed to and fro upon unimportant tasks, and a few desolate-looking and naked little mites were playing in the sand.

There was no wailing or other signs of grief ; a complete indifference brooded over the scene. In spite of this it did not lack a certain poetry. The barren, dire obtrusive poverty threw out into bold relief the arcadian simplicity of those who dwelt there, and whose lives were unending hardship. Why, we wondered, with all the world to live

in, had this little community chosen this arid, inhospitable spot in which to pass its days?

On our approach, all hurried forward to meet us in friendly, unembarrassed fashion.

We dismounted, and I instructed my sub-assistant surgeon to examine the body and report, and Mohammed 'Amin to make his own inquiries, having full confidence in his shrewdness.

The headman, white-haired, thin and wrinkled, gave us God's blessing in soft tones and led Hamdi and myself into his hut, a spacious one some thirty feet long and fifteen in width.

It was bare of any form of furnishing, save at the far end, where a big carpet was spread out, upon which a few rough cushions were negligently scattered.

Its comparative gloom was refreshing to our aching, dust-filled eyes. Save for the doorway, it possessed no other aperture, but sufficient light was provided by thousands of minute stars, the creation of the brilliant sunshine piercing the interstices of the reedy walls.

The head man led us courteously to the carpet, on which we seated ourselves. The remainder of the hut was quickly filled by the village population, both men and women.

While sipping our black coffee we made quiet inquiry into the tragedy.

The man had been a shepherd, and had been tending his flock late at night—so they said—when he met his death by a bullet. None had heard a shot or suspected any evil.

There had, however, been trouble with the neighbouring village over the pasturage of sheep. That village contained men of evil repute; it was possible, nay, most probable, therefore, that the

crime had been committed by one of these out of spite. Otherwise no one could even hazard a guess as to the reason for taking his life.

My sub-assistant surgeon came in to report that the man, who was some fifty years of age, had been shot in the back with a spherical lead bullet. This he had extracted and now placed in my hand.

I examined it carefully, going out into the sunlight to do so.

It had evidently been fired from a muzzle-loader, and I noticed a loose tongue of lead which had obviously been prized up by the ram-rod when forcing it home.

Sticking out from under this tongue was the end of a charred hair. I forced it up with my penknife, and found under the protection of the lead covering a small portion of the remainder of the hair, untouched by the heat of the explosion. It was crinkled, and black and white in colour.

Mohammed Amin reported that the village had a second shepherd, who liked the dead man not at all. The reason? The sheikh had a daughter courted by both, but the woman favoured the living man, yet dallied with the dead, so that there was doubt as to where her inclinations really lay. So, even here, love and hate *did* wander hand in hand.

With this information I went back to my seat on the carpet. I told Mohammed 'Amin to go quickly with one of the villagers and collect all the rifles the huts contained.

I asked to see the sheikh's daughter. She stood forth from the press at the end of the hut. I received a shock.

I expected to see a young girl possessing sufficient comeliness at least to warm the fires of jealousy.

Instead, a very tall, gaunt woman of something over forty, with austere, ill-conditioned features looked stolidly at me. Her expressionless face and the hardness in her eyes were sufficient to freeze all humour, and it seemed strange that one so outwardly repellent should inwardly possess the fuel to kindle the hearts of two matured men. She was a fitting product of the dreary spot in which she lived, and her features were but the mirror of the bitter severity of her surroundings.

'Amin came in with a bundle of fifteen rifles of several kinds, ancient and modern, and dropped them with a clatter before me.

We went through the well-known trick of sniffing their muzzles, and had no difficulty in smelling one but recently fired. It had not been cleaned. It was a muzzle-loader, the bore was still covered with grains of freshly-charred powder, and it belonged to the dead man's rival.

"Go," I said to Amin, "and bring me from his hut such wool as you may find."

He returned shortly with a double handful. It was crinkled, and in colour black and white, excellent for making the wadding for a charge.

I asked for its possessor to stand before me. He came calmly, his face showing neither apprehension nor even interest.

"Why," I asked him, "did you slay that man?" His face lost none of its impassivity.

"God willed it," was all he said.

The spectators showed neither horror nor reproof, nor even surprise; they had, of course, known the culprit all along, but they would not betray him to me. If unaided I found him—it was God's will. If not—Allah Kareem—God is merciful.

Our task was done, we finished the second round of coffee, the dead man quite forgotten ; our talk, in which the slayer joined, was of the crops, of the lack of water, and of the possibility of increasing it. We rode away, while the interrupted work of the community was resumed as if our coming had not been.

On our way back we visited Mohsin, the head sheikh, and told him that we would come on the morrow's night to hear the punishment to be inflicted—for we dealt with these cases according to centuries-old tribal law, by which a man, for such an act, receives not the punishment of death. If he steals, he loses his hand ; if he slanders, his tongue is slit, the punishment fitting the crime. Yet the true value of a life has not been valued—it depends on its possessor.

The following night we came as promised and mounted to the flat roof of Mohsin's house, where all the sheikhs of the tribe were assembled.

Mohsin gave us kindly hospitality, and then, when the food was cleared away, we smoked the long Turkish cigarettes, reclining at our ease in a queer, mixed light of star and lantern, while a soft wind blew, rustling the palm fronds all about us.

Then I asked Mohsin concerning the punishment. It was as if it were a matter of small importance, hardly sufficient to disturb our cool, contented ease.

“ One year's banishment and a fine of five hundred rupees,” he said, had been agreed to by all the sheikhs, as fitting punishment for one who was a child of ignorance.

I suggested ten years' exile and fifteen hundred rupees blood money.

That was too severe, said Mohsin. So we

bargained over the penalty like merchants over the price of merchandize.

Indeed, they had started with the minimum, knowing full well that I would raise it ; and I exceeded the requirements of tribal justice, knowing the ebb and flow of values would, in the end, find their proper level.

So, at length, justice was universally agreed at five years' banishment and a fine of seven hundred and fifty rupees.

Mohsin would himself later pronounce the sentence, and the culprit would not question his authority or the justice of the sentence.

I thought of that scrawny spinster waiting to hear our verdict. Would she grieve? How would she bide the five years' passing? Would she share his exile? Or was existence so harsh? Was life so cheap, that love was robbed even of grief?

CHAPTER XI

KERBELA THE SECULAR

THE ordinary routine work of the town consumed many hours of the day and night, and there were long visits to pay to the outlying districts. The staff was not too plentiful. How could it be when the vast and daily growing needs of the whole country had to be considered, while those knowing the Arabs and their language were so few? Two army telegraphists, two Indian clerks, an Indian assistant-surgeon, and Hamdi, an Egyptian, my personal assistant, who became my very devoted friend, completed it.

I had not long been at Kerbela before becoming perturbed at the indebtedness of the town. I made discreet and careful inquiry regarding the revenue, and found my Reis-al-Beladiyah had kept much of it for himself, and had reaped additional benefit by letting out Government property to his agents and friends for a nominal sum which reached the treasury, and for a liberal commission which filled his own pockets. He was duly tried and convicted to a term of penal servitude—and Mohammed Chelabi took his vacant chair. That meant that the whole finances and taxation of the town had to be revised, but it was well worth the labour, for in six months the debt of the town had not only been wiped out, but we had a surplus, and the revenue became so

satisfactory that we intended to start tramways and instal electric plant. But at this time the central administration was too hard pressed for money, and our surplus funds had to go into the common pool.

In accordance with A.T.'s instructions, we started a girls' and boys' school. He sent for, and had specially trained, Indian teachers from India, but suitable ones were hard to obtain, since a knowledge of Arabic was essential. After three months I inspected the schools to judge of the progress made. The boys' mathematical class was the first to be visited. The teacher called his pupils loudly to "attention" on my entering the room, and, as loudly, bade them sit down again. He then asked a small boy to stand up and count in English, which he did with the most amazing rapidity and correctness, "oner, two-er, three-er, four-er," but when he reached "twenty-fiv-er" I stopped him abruptly and asked him what number followed sixteen or what preceded eleven. To neither of these questions could he give an answer. He had merely repeated the numbers like a parrot, without comprehending their significance. The master was told to teach fewer numbers, but more thoroughly.

We next proceeded to the geography class. Here a boy was called out and told to inform the Governor what an archipelago was, which he was doing with great success when I interrupted him also and asked him where the road led to outside the schoolroom window, or where it came from. He stared at me blankly; I then asked him where the water which supplied Kerbela was obtained. Neither could he answer me this question. So I told the teacher to start his geography lesson from the room, to continue it to the street, thence to the town, and

then to other cities in Mesopotamia, and finally to neighbouring countries and, when all this was perfectly mastered, to deal with archipelagoes.

Experience showed me it was necessary to have a teachers' class, and this I had to undertake myself. I found it highly entertaining, since the teachers were more like schoolchildren themselves.

The safety of the town had to be carefully provided for, so, in addition to the police force, it was necessary to have a secret police who informed me through Mohammed 'Amin of any plots, and there were many, not only for my own discomfort, but for that of the town, and even of the country. I found by experience that when I received information of these conspiracies, it was best to nip them in the bud at once by taking instant action.

Concerning some, A.T. would inform me from his sources at Baghdad, and on one occasion he sent a cipher telegram which I received at 9 o'clock at night to say that an individual named Mohammed Ali, a wealthy citizen and important, not only in Kerbela, but in Mesopotamia, was trafficking with the Turk and hatching plots against the British authorities. I called in Mohammed 'Amin and explained the matter to him. At 2.0 a.m. we quietly surrounded Mohammed Ali's house. By guarding every exit, we occupied the whole building before he became aware of our presence. We seized him and his correspondence, which was considerable, and at 3.30 a.m. he was conveyed under escort to Baghdad. He was, I believe, sent to Ceylon as the result of the inquiry made into his activities. After his departure we all went quietly to bed, and the town was quite unaware that anything had taken place, till it wakened to activity at the usual time.

It was, indeed, essential to act in this manner. For throughout Mesopotamia the Turks had many spies and many adherents, who constantly sought opportunity to raise turmoil in the city, which might have led to the most serious results, since we were completely unprotected. The task of the British Army was to smash the Turkish forces. It was ours to shatter Turkish political intrigue, and so secure our army's rear.

The cleanliness of the town presented great difficulty, but was of the greatest importance. The close-packed houses and narrow streets were death-traps in case of an epidemic. A strong corps of cleaners was organized, and at 6 o'clock every morning we used to ride about the city to see that the streets were perfectly clean.

It lacked shade, so we obtained seeds of many beautiful trees from India and started a nursery; and before I left, the new plants were liberally distributed throughout the city. We had to be farmers and know all about crops, to encourage the tribes to weed their lands and tend them properly, and increase the fertility of wheat and other grain; to help the army authorities in the difficult task of obtaining adequate supplies. Incessant touch had to be maintained with all the sheikhs and petty sheikhs of the tribes, and of the inhabitants of the city in order to keep a gentle hand upon the pulse of the community. And then, too, one was magistrate and had to try many cases each day and well into the night. Some were simple, of course, but others were complicated in the extreme and needed much patient thought to unravel them.

A doubtful decision gave us great disquiet, so that we paced the floor into the small hours. Nor did we

hesitate to reverse a finding we felt might be unjust. There was small leisure either to eat or to sleep, but the intensity of the work minimized the necessity for either. As in all communities, especially in times of war, there was much poverty, and this greatly exercised my mind. Turkish dependents were provided for through the medium of A.T.'s Baghdad organization. Indeed, they were well looked after, and their care affords tribute to British fairness. But there was considerable suffering among the inhabitants of the city itself. Normal trade was dislocated and, as I have said, when I took over the city, it was heavily in debt, so that there were no funds available for benevolent purposes. The Beladiyah was therefore summoned and asked what should be done. They supposed that "God alone knew."

Now Kerbela was watered by a great canal which was dug from the Euphrates, twenty-five miles distant. Throughout the whole distance its banks were liberally sprinkled with date-palms, and the date-palm is valuable. I therefore asked to whom these trees belonged, and they replied they were God's gift to the weary traveller.

I replied, "You are wrong. They belong to me."

They looked greatly astonished. Up to then they regarded their present governor as different to their Turkish governors in that he did not appear to fill his pockets from the gleanings of the city, but it appeared that he had learnt wisdom! It was evident that even when 2,000 rupees, the proceeds of auctioning the said palm-trees, was distributed among the poor, their first impression still remained, and that they still think my own income reaped the benefit.

We found the mortality of the Arab children far

too high, so we took action to consult General Wilcocks, who gave us many valuable hints for their welfare, including their diet both in the hot and cold seasons, and three months reduced the mortality by over 25 per cent. General Wilcox found time—how he did it I cannot imagine—to make a deep study even of this question.

The work was too much for one man, naturally, but our chief in Baghdad was doing the work of twenty men, so we could well attempt that which would normally be done by five.

So we laboured to bring happiness, to give justice where this quality had been ill-practised, to give peace and plenty and friendship, and when I left Kerbela I made them a speech.

“ Oh, people of Kerbela,” I said, “ to free your country and give you happiness, the British dead are sown from Basra to Mosul, the waters of your famous rivers have run red with the blood of Britain’s sons, and Britain in her grief forgets to seek reward. May your happiness bloom as the rose ; may your prosperity increase as the wheat field sprinkled with the rain and warmed in the sunshine, and as years pass may you not forget what my country has done for you.”

A few months later rebellion was rampant and they were murdering the political officers throughout the country, for England took away their shield and left them defenceless. What was that shield ? It was the word of England—England had said the Arab should be free. Gradually there dawned in the recesses of men’s minds the thought that England had forgotten her word, and might dishonour her bond. There was delay and apparent hesitation in stating clearly her intentions. The Turk kept the



GROUP SHOWING THE GRAND DUKE DIMITRIEFF (SECOND FROM RIGHT), SIR CHARLES AND LADY MARLING. IN THE BACKGROUND THE MOSQUE OF HUSSEIN.

peace with cannon ; we held friendship by the word of a great country.

The Grand-Duke Dimitrieff came to visit Kerbela. In the cool of the morning we went the round of the city. Everywhere great and small saluted us. The merchants rose in their booths and made obeisance—the children smiled. I left the answer to these salutations to the Grand Duke, but he, with charming courtesy, bade me respond to the greetings of the people. “ It is your city, not mine. It is you they honour, not me,” he said.

After a time—“ How many soldiers have you here to guard you ? ” he asked. “ None,” I replied. “ And how far away are the nearest troops in case of need ? ” he next asked. “ In Baghdad, eighty miles distant,” I answered. He stood stock still and looked at me in astonishment. “ Incredible ! ” he said, “ in all Russia I have not seen anything like it. Indeed, such a thing would be impossible in Russia ; how do you do it ? ” “ Sir,” I answered, “ it is not I who govern this city, it is England.”

Here is the whole situation summed up in a few words. The Arabs relied on the word of a great nation, whose integrity was a byword in the “ suqs ” of the Middle East.

It was recognized that we were the sons of our country—that, as such, we were interpreting her intentions and desires.

Behind us stood the great sentinel of England’s might and justice. So long as that was the case we were inviolable. If intrigue weakened men’s minds in that belief, our lives were in instant danger, as was the case with poor Marshall, who was murdered in Nejf ; but, when England herself, through her vacillation and hesitation, appeared to confirm the

evil whisperings of those who hated her, then indeed we stood in direst peril.

All the work which we performed was, really, only that carried out by trustees. We, ourselves, were but the tools of destiny chosen to exercise that function.

There are many who laboured in Mesopotamia for many years who regret, some even who resent, the forced abandonment of their several tasks, the more so since those tasks were left but half-completed. But, as the wheel of time revolves, and the thread of history unwinds, future generations will value their labour at its true and lasting worth.

It is true that we might have maintained our position by force, if the nation had been prepared to stand the cost. But a thousand years of coercion would not have made willing subjects or loyal partners of the Arabs.

Think of Tallal, whose sacrifice is so graphically described by Lawrence. He saw the torture inflicted on little children by the brutal, revengeful Turk. Mad with grief, his heart breaks and, casting his mantle over his face, he commits virtual suicide for the unknown innocents by rushing headlong upon the Turkish host. What will the race from which he is sprung not venture for its brethren?

Think of the Arab officers who were ready to sacrifice their wives, their children, their homes and themselves, to suffer ignoble deaths for an ideal they held sacred, giving their bond when their bodies, having escaped the peril of the combat, were secured from hurt.

Think of the 16,000 Syrian dead, the harvest of patriotic chivalry fallen beneath the sickle wielded by the mighty fist of France.

Think of the Syrian patriot facing the Turkish hangman with unquenchable pride, not in insensate and intoxicated fanaticism, but with smiling fortitude.

With such haphazard examples, taken from a page of the history of a great people, can we doubt the depth of Arab feeling, or question their determination to be free?

When men pass from thought to potent, fertile action, we may reason that their thinking is not rubble to be scattered on the winds of indifference. And, when that action leads them to the altar of self-sacrifice, we will, if we be wise, give heed.

In December 1918, I was appointed to the Island of Bahrein to negotiate an Order in Council and to keep in touch with Ibn Sa'ud. I came to Kerbela accompanied by an enthusiastic multitude. After a night of speeches I left before dawn, alone, while the city slept. I have never been back. I am glad of this, for I was not there when the country revolted in 1920. The revolt was suppressed after considerable loss, and the sacrifice of many lives.

The real cause of that revolt was the unquenchable desire for freedom in the hearts of the Arabs.

We built a splendid edifice, but its foundations were insecure, and its fall was certain. The Arab prized our friendship, but he worshipped freedom. He valued our assistance, but he prized independence higher. We gave him a partnership, but he wanted his own enterprise. And so disgruntled Syrian officers, deprived of a place in Damascus, other Arab officers who had served under Feisal, and the Bolshevik found an easy task in raising the country.

In the end we surrendered Iraq to the Arab. We lost a country, but we will gain something greater—the undying friendship of a great people.

The destiny of the Arabian people is only half fulfilled, but the Arab does not forget. He will remember the battlefields of Palestine and Mesopotamia ; he will recall those who rest there, and he will not forget to whom he owes his freedom.

We made mistakes ; but Providence made us great enough to rectify them.

To have held Mesopotamia as a part of our Empire, however loosely, would have not only alienated the Arab nation for ever, it would have imposed a great expenditure of men and money to have maintained our position.

Remember the words of Haddad :

“ You are English, your characteristics, your mental outlook and your pride are the result of centuries of independence. Suppose a foreign country was to conquer England and deny you any expression of your own individuality, impose upon you a culture foreign to your taste, create a legislation alien to your customs and usage. Would you consider yourselves free? . . . It is no longer possible to keep a nation in subjection, especially a nation like the Arab.”

And these words were spoken when the Turk was still their master, and when an attempt for freedom seemed but a forlorn and desperate hope.

However greatly we had laboured, our work was, in one sense, in vain. In another sense it will live for ever, for the Arab people have learnt again what real justice and duty and truth mean, and these will form the foundation of their future state.

CHAPTER XII

LEACHMAN

ENGLAND has seldom produced so remarkable a character as Leachman, and there are few men who have given so much to their country, or received so little recognition for it, as has this son of Sussex soil.

He was still quite a young officer in the Sussex Regiment when the lure of adventure could no longer be denied ; and so he spent all his leave periods in wandering about Arabia, and in getting himself entangled in queer situations and in running countless, and apparently unjustifiable, risks.

The tales of other Arabian explorers such as Doughty, Palgrave, Burton, Wavel, Miss Bell and others have been told, and in consequence they occupy an honoured place in their country's roll of honour and renown—and rightly so.

The name of Leachman, on the contrary, is known only to a few of his countrymen. Yet both in the extent of his travels, in their variety and in their dangers and adventures, he excels by far the travellers I have mentioned.

He deserves a page of history for himself, firstly, because of the number of his journeys, of which but small account has been taken ; secondly, because the result of these wanderings had their fruit in the great work which he was able to perform in keeping the wild elements of the Arab tribes in check during the war, and especially during the middle period of

the Mesopotamian campaign ; so that his activities in times of peace were of real practical value in the period of war.

The value of his work is the more apparent owing to the fact that, whereas in the Hedjaz and on the borders of Palestine, Lawrence was enabled to carry out his task by calling on vast supplies of money and abundance of every kind, and was assisted by the fact that the Arab forces were in close contact with, and supported by, the British armies in the field, Leachman, on the other hand, in many instances worked quite alone and almost unaided.

Such material aid as could be given him was, of necessity, sparingly bestowed ; and, in place of gold with which to bribe men into quiet, or to give their aid, he ventured his life continuously and fearlessly in order to produce similar results.

Instead of reaping glory therefrom, he lies to-day in a lonely grave in Baghdad, having met the fate which he long knew must inevitably be his.

No finer tribute has been paid a man than that unintentionally given by an enemy.

When, in 1918, the Turks were driven back, the British forces captured Preusser, the German agent, who, when he was later confronted with Leachman, sprang to his feet and saluted ; he asked that he might shake him by the hand, saying that, though an enemy, he had long desired to meet one so renowned, and one for whom he had so great an admiration.

In Preusser's diary, which was confiscated, were these simple yet poignant words :

" Not all the blandishments of the Turks, nor all the gold they have distributed, nor any German effort, can undermine the influence among the Arab tribes of one man, Leachman."



LEACHMAN.
[OF WHOM THIS IS THE ONLY KNOWN PORTRAIT.]



These simple words admirably sum up Leachman's work, for such was, indeed, the case—his influence could not be undermined.

He kept the powerful Anaizah tribe friendly to British interests, and maintained peace amongst the majority of the tribes of Northern Arabia which, but for his activities, would certainly have got out of hand.

By his intrepid courage he frequently prevented serious outbreaks, and won for the name of Englishman a respect unprecedented.

Even to-day, throughout Arabia, when his name is mentioned, the Arab will answer, "Hua a' rrajul—(He was a *Man*).” Than which they can bestow no greater tribute.

Unfortunately, the story of Leachman's travels before the war, and of many of his exploits during that period, can never be known.

He was most reticent and shy by nature, and he detested notoriety and, although pressed both by his friends and by various publishers to tell his story, he never did so.

Indeed, on one occasion when he was home in England, and I was discussing the matter with him, I told him that I considered it his duty to tell the world his experiences, since the story of his work belonged not to himself but to his country. He replied, "Yes, old chap, I know, but it would make me feel such a fool."

It has, therefore, only been possible to glean something of what he has performed by the chance presence of others, who happened to be with him on some of his journeys, or from Arabs who were eye-witnesses of some of his adventures. But on rare occasions when quite alone with him out in the

desert, a passing landmark would remind him of some incident. He would then tell the story connected with it, not to inform you of what he had done, but to amuse you by the quaintness of the happening.

Indeed, he had a most droll way of relating these adventures, so that in the mirth which he invoked one was inclined to lose sight of the significance of what had occurred.

The Turks hated him long before the war because he had a way of appearing in Turkish territory, either in Syria or Mesopotamia, and suddenly disappearing into the interior.

They were extremely suspicious of him, and rumours used to reach them of his wanderings among the various tribes, which made them both jealous and apprehensive regarding his real objects.

In point of fact they had no cause for apprehension, for Leachman was merely filled with the spirit of adventure, and was neither a spy nor an intriguer, as they considered him to be.

On one occasion, just before the War, he suddenly appeared in Baghdad, where he remained quietly for a few weeks.

The Turks watched him like a cat does a mouse, but he strolled about the bazaars in his nonchalant, careless manner, conversed with all and sundry, until the Turks, unable to withhold their curiosity any longer, visited him in his dwelling and asked him for what purpose he had visited Baghdad.

"For my health," replied Leachman.

They replied, "Baghdad, at this period of the year, is not such a healthy place."

"Perhaps not for some," Leachman answered, "but for *me* it is the most healthy place I know,

and the waters and the air suit me to perfection."

Such a reply made the Turks still more suspicious and they redoubled the watch upon his movements.

And then suddenly he completely disappeared.

There was a terrible commotion, inquiries were sent out in every direction, but no trace of the missing Leachman could be found.

At length rumour reached them that he was in Kerbela, in which city a Turkish brigade was stationed.

Orders were, in consequence, sent to the civil and military authorities of that place that the city was to be searched, and, if found, Leachman was to be brought post haste back to Baghdad.

For seven days the Turks combed the city, and when the Turks undertake a task of this nature, they do it thoroughly. Yet no signs of Leachman or further news of him could be obtained, so on the evening of the seventh day they gave up the search.

On the eighth day at dawn a small caravan left the city, bound for Damascus. In the rear was a laden camel, and perched precariously across its rump a ragged Bedouin, his aba torn and dirty.

He clung to his perch with bony knees pressed tight to the sides of his scraggy mount, and grinned cheerfully at the Turkish guard stationed at the outlet of the town.

The guard gave this miserable one small attention, and the caravan slowly made its way through the palm groves, and out into the open desert.

It headed due east, making for Shifatah, an oasis forty miles to the eastward, threading its way carefully across the undulating plain.

When it was an hour's distance from Kerbela, the

rider of the rear camel slithered to the ground and called out, "Ya Abdullah—taal—(Oh, Abdullah, come here)."

At once Abdullah swung his camel, a fine white Nejdi, out of the line, and made it kneel before the ragged Bedouin, who mounted it himself, while Abdullah clambered upon the other.

The ragged Bedouin was Leachman, but so disguised that he was unrecognizable, and so Arab-looking that the dull-witted Turks had been easily deceived.

The caravan made its way leisurely forward, for the camels were well laden, and time was of no importance.

The desert here is covered with low scrub and rank grass, and stretches away in brown billows beyond the eye's range. These billows, however, are deceptive, for the hollows between each successive wave are often divided into deep, sandy wadis with steep banks. It might be thought that the whole space were devoid of human shape, yet an army might be passing within a mile and remain completely hidden.

It happened that as the day began to fade, a vast line of ridden camels appeared to spring from the bowels of the earth, moving in the form of a crescent, silhouetted against the sunset's afterglow.

The nearer horn of the crescent was moving directly towards the caravan.

Both parties spied each other at the same time.

The advance guard of the crescent brandished their weapons, and with raucous shouts bore down upon the caravan, whose members gazed wildly round for protection or concealment, and, seeing neither, huddled together in a frightened knot, like

sheep in a panic from a shepherd's dog, and thus awaited, in fatalistic and impotent inaction, whatever might befall—all save one.

Leachman, taking in the situation at a glance, left his companions, and rode slowly and calmly towards the distant horn of the crescent.

The Bedouin, taken up with their descent upon the caravan, and the hope of plunder it promised, either did not notice, or paid scant heed to his solitary passage. Unmolested, he traversed the distance separating him from the Bedouin column. When he was near, one called out—"Mēn? (Who?)"

Leachman made no response, but continued his slow approach till he joined the throng, while they gazed at him in wonder and suspicion.

Then he, in his turn, asked—"Mēn?" And they replied, "Anaizah." Leachman, who knew the name of every important sheikh in Arabia, asked:

"Wen Ibn Hadhal?—(Where is Ibn Hadhal?)"

Ibn Hadhal was the paramount sheikh of this tribe.

A Bedouin pointed with his camel stick towards the head of the column, and thither he rode, accompanied by the two with whom he had spoken, until he came to Ibn Hadhal.

To him he made himself known, and Fahad Beg, as he was more commonly known, asked him whence he came, and whither he was going.

Leachman replied that, concerning whence he came, he had escaped the Turks in Kerbela, at which Fahad Beg smiled, and as concerning whither he was going, his own way lay with that of Fahad Beg, who replied:

"Inshallah—(If God wills)." Which may have different meanings.

Apparently God willed it, as Fahad Beg said, for seven days later Leachman was still riding with him many miles to the southward.

Fahad Beg was on "ghazzu,"—a raiding expedition—into Ibn Sa'ud's territory, and Leachman joined in the venture, and became his close friend in the slow days that followed.

After several days' journeying, they reached a spot well to the south, and pitched their camp by the brackish wells of Atifiri, intending to stay two days, for the grazing was good, and the water sufficient for their needs.

On the second day the camels were grazing far afield, and the camp was at rest.

Coffee was being served in the guest tent.

Fahad Beg was sitting cross-legged, leaning back against a camel saddle, his curved sword across his knees, and he grunted his appreciation as Mohsin, his cousin, told of a wild adventure wherein he had lost an eye; and the remaining orb flashed as he described his slaying of the man who had injured him.

"Although the blood flowed down my face like a river, by God, I removed his head from his neck with a back-handed stroke." And he illustrated the stroke with his arm wide flung, nearly striking Fahad on the side of the head.

The coffee-bearer went his round, pouring the black liquid from his pot into the handleless cups with a flourish of his arm borne of long practice, so that he spilt not a drop, nor gave to any more than was his just due.

He had just handed the cup to Leachman, when some one came wildly in, gesticulating and pointing behind him through the entrance to the tent.

Fahad and his companions rose hurriedly, and

stood for a while gazing in surprise and wonder to the south, where a ragged line of camels were seen being propelled at full speed towards the camp, leaving a trail of dust behind each one.

These were Fahad's own camels, being urged from their grazing ground with frenzied shouts and the waving arms of their guards. At some little distance behind them a heavier cloud of dust rose in the still air, betraying a body of mounted men in hot pursuit.

In a few moments the camp was in pandemonium.

As each riderless camel came within reach, one leapt upon his back, and snatching his weapons and abandoning all other of his possessions, made off as fast as he could propel his mount.

In a short space, Fahad and all his men had fled, leaving everything behind them, save their lives and their weapons.

Meantime the cloud of dust rolled rapidly up to the camp, and soon were seen another yelling mob of men, some firing rifles at hazard at the flying Anaizah, others brandishing swords, and all yelling at the tops of their voices.

In a surging wave they converged upon the camp, where the hope of plunder stayed pursuit.

Each man hastily dismounted and dashed off to get his share of loot, no one hindering him, excepting maybe one of his own clan who claimed equality of possession, so that fierce wrangling broke out as mobs of men seized on the plunder.

The spacious guest tent attracted the largest mob, for here they thought could be found the richest spoil. Thither they raced, some mounted, some on foot. The first to arrive dashed in, and the next instant stood, arrested in mute surprise.

In the centre of the floor lay the overturned coffee

pot, kicked over by one too hasty to pick his path. The black liquid was still trickling over the carpet, the camel saddles arranged in a rude semi-circle, and seated, leaning carelessly against one of these and scribbling in a book, from which occupation he did not even glance up to see who came, a lean Englishman, who seemed totally oblivious to what was happening, or who was too busy to interrupt his labours.

For a brief instant Leachman's life hung on the whim of these fierce men, excited as they were by the pursuit and the lure of gain, from procuring which they were seemingly baulked by his presence. Would wonder and surprise quell their natural instincts? or would they let their passions run riot? As more and more joined the throng in the tent, the light was blotted out.

"Remove from the doorway. How to see to write if you eat up all the daylight?" shouted Leachman. Instinctively they crowded to the sides, and let in a narrow passage of light. By their obedience to his command his life was saved. At what a risk, and by how narrow a margin!

After the excitement of pursuit and in their desperate greed for plunder, a life to them was less than nothing; a shot or a sword-thrust their immediate remedy for disputed ownership. The unexpectedness of his action, his calmness, and his cold courage to remain when all else had fled, drove fierceness out to give place to wonder; his audacity in thus remaining a hostage to fate, with odds one to a thousand that he would be slain on sight, fills one with amaze, yet that single chance was enough for him to venture his life for adventure's sake. I greatly doubt whether he even reckoned up the odds.

These men were of Ibn Sa'ud's following who, learning in good time of Fahad Beg's approach, had caught him unawares, and reaped a fair reward.

A few wondering questions put to him, and comic answers given created good humour, and Leachman became the "protected," and in his newly-made friends' company he journeyed to Nedjd, and met its ruler, Ibn Sa'ud.

Unfortunately, the further tale of his adventures on this occasion is lost, for at this point in the story we reached Shifatah, and Leachman went about his several tasks. Nor could we press him later for further details, for he at once became embarrassed and shy, and hid his confusion in an apparent petulance.

I picked up the final threads at Bahrein where, some weeks later, after the incidents described above, he arrived in an Arab dhow, half starving and in ill health, nevertheless taking ship to Basra, and sharing the deck with a motley crowd of Arabs.

For weeks no news of him had been available, and a report was published in the Turkish press, with ill-concealed gratification, to the effect that Leachman had been captured by Ibn Rashid, Ruler of Hail, and a friend of Turkey, who, it was stated, had cast him into prison. That same night Leachman walked into the British Consulate in Basra !

CHAPTER XIII

‘‘WHO IS LACHMUN?’’

KERBELA and Nejef, the two Shiah shrines, were joined by a dusty cart track, running in an almost straight line for the forty miles which separate these two cities.

The track marks the boundary between the desert and the sown land. From its western edge, the desert, here covered with a coarse scrub, intermingled with camel thorn, stretches away to the far horizon in monotonous undulations. From its eastern edge, rich fields of wheat and barley, and extensive pasture lands carpet a level plain, whose flatness is only broken by the high banks of the canals, which, from a distance, look like ridges of rugged hills. The hamlets of the settled Arabs are sprinkled liberally amongst the cornfields, and emphasize the extent of the canal system, and the richness of the soil.

The road is then a frontier line between the wandering Bedouin living their lives of hardship, privation, want and danger, and their more fortunate brethren, the Husseinis, who, having abandoned a life so hazardous, were now comparatively affluent and comfortable.

The nomad tribes move to different pastures according to the season of the year, and the conditions of the grazing in different localities ; so

now the black tents of the Anaizah bordered the road.

Leachman had decreed that they should not cross that narrow strip, and in order to see that his injunction was obeyed, I had a few Shabana patrolling the road. He then went off to Mosul and left me to keep an eye on them, and report any untoward happening.

From the western edge the hungry Bedouin gazed with envious eyes at the fat flocks and herds beyond the border. A strange protection—this dusty road, three shabana, and the word of Leachman!

There came a day when a shepherd of the Husseinis was grazing his black sheep close to the road's edge. He held in his hand a long staff, on which he leant, one bare leg twined about it to give his body greater ease, and he sang as he idly watched the Bedouin on the other side. Thus singing, he for a while neglected his charge, and one sheep, tempted by a tuft of grass on the other side, crossed the track to satiate its greed. At once it was pounced upon by one of the tribesmen. The scuffle necessary to secure it at once attracted the shepherd's attention, and he rushed at the Bedouin, his staff uplifted, and shrieked at him to release the captive.

The Bedouin, dragging the kicking sheep by one leg, shouted in return :

“By God, if what is on the other side is yours, that which is on this side is ours,” and he called to witness those of his clansmen who, at the clamour, swarmed out of their tents to his aid, some carrying rifles, others snatching their daggers from their belts. The shepherd, finding himself powerless to retrieve his property in the face of the menacing attitude of these wolves, looked round desperately for help. By chance a shabana was passing, and to him he

made complaint. The shabana, in the name of the Government, sternly ordered that the sheep should be restored. He was met with jeers and abuse, so he dug his heels into his horse, to urge it forward to scatter the crowd, and the beast had hardly advanced a step, when one raised his rifle and shot its rider dead. There, one hour later, I saw him, stretched upon the dusty road as he had fallen, no man having touched him.

I made inquiry, and found this was part of the Arab encampment, consisting of a section of the Anaizah under Jiza'a, a stoutish, bearded, middle-aged man of surly aspect. I demanded the culprit. He replied that judgment lay in the hands of Fahad Beg, his paramount chief, and the latter was, I knew, far distant.

I therefore returned to Kerbela and telegraphed to Leachman details of the affair. I received an immediate answer as follows :—

“ Tell Jiza'a to remove his tribe seven days' journey into the desert.”

I despatched this order at once to Jiza'a, who as speedily replied :

“ In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate, Fahad Bey I know. Who is Lachmun ? ”

I telegraphed this reply to Leachman with relish. If I knew my man, Jiza'a was in for trouble, and I was intrigued to know just how Leachman would deal with the situation. Back came his reply :

“ Tell Jiza'a that if he is not gone by six o'clock to-morrow morning, I will send aeroplanes to bomb him.”

Once more my messenger set out, and brought

back the following message, one word less brief than his former one :

“ Ibn Hadhal (Fahad Bey) I know. Lachmun I know not.”

In a few hours this message was in Leachman’s hands, and early in the afternoon he telegraphed :

“ Picquet Jiza’a. I am arriving before dawn to-morrow with six armoured cars. Please have breakfast for crews.”

The last sentence was typical of Leachman’s kindly forethought for those who served him.

Amin Bey and I rode forth in the late afternoon and, concealed behind some scrub, watched Jiza’a’s encampment through our glasses. We debated whether he would brazen it out, and if so, how Leachman would deal with the guilty without including the innocent in his punishment.

When we came in view of the camp it was peaceful-looking, and lacked any sign of commotion, and remained thus till the sun sunk low in a yellow glory, and the forms of the far-flung grazing camels became indistinct.

Suddenly there was a bustle in the camp, camels were being driven in, tents hastily lowered, while we could see the womenfolk hurrying over some tasks, indistinguishable in the gathering gloom.

Jiza’a’s nerve had broken, and he was fleeing from the man he said he did not know.

In a remarkably short space of time the tribe was on the move. Amin and I mounted, and, making a wide detour, kept them hardly in view, for it was just at that time when the gloom of departed day was at its deepest, and the stars yet dimly shining. We rode on a flank so as not to stumble upon

stragglers, and followed more by sound than vision. Thus we travelled for about twelve miles, when we could see indistinctly to our left front, a black lump, it might be a hill or large mound, and for this the Bedouin were evidently making. We circled it, and, to our surprise, they did not come down the far side where, at a distance, we awaited them. After an interval a couple of fires twinkled and blinked at us, and we knew that they had halted for the night. Anyway, we risked it.

We both knew this flat-topped hill on the road to Shifatah, so we rode back eastward to Kerbela ; at first at a slow walk, and talking in whispers so as not to betray ourselves, then later at a gallop.

At five o'clock next morning, Leachman reached Kerbela in his "Dodge" car, six Rolls Royce armoured cars, and a Ford van following in his wake.

The town was still asleep when, after a hurried breakfast, Leachman asked me to join him in his car. When I had told him where Jiza'a was, he well knew the spot, having passed it many times on his countless journeying to and fro, so he needed no guidance, and friendship was his only need for me ; at least I like to think so, for I knew Leachman did often feel lonely, and he always seemed to claim me when he could ; perhaps because I spoke little and was obedient to his wishes.

We made a great clatter as we crossed the long stone bridge on the outskirts of Kerbela, and hardly less when upon the desert proper, so that I doubted surprise, and expected that Jiza'a would be fully prepared for us, or in flight.

About halfway a serious mishap befell us—a deep wadi filled with loose sand crossed our front, and in this, in spite of brawn and labour, four of our six

armoured cars stuck fast. Time was of vital necessity, so Leachman was not for waiting, and pushed forward with the remaining two as fast as possible. He had timed the venture to a nicety, for just as day was dawning we saw Jiza'a's encampment on the hill before us.

Once more, six hundred yards distant from the mound, for it was in reality nothing more, another wadi barred our way, and Leachman, not wishing to risk the remaining two cars in its treacherous softness, ordered them to halt on its edge, and be prepared for anything.

He himself went in his car full speed ahead for the camp, and halted within twenty yards of it.

His orders to the officer in charge of the cars had been delivered with the rapidity of pistol shots, and his own action was amazing in its methodical swiftness. So when he halted his car with its three unarmed occupants—for he had a tribesman with him—on the very edge of the encampment, but a few seconds had elapsed, and the camp was so silent that I conceived it to be deserted.

Leachman jumped out.

“Go, seek Jiza'a,” he snapped at the tribesman, “and tell him that if he is not here within a minute and a half, I will rake his camp to bits with my machine guns.”

And all this time the black tents were apparently void of life, and a fateful silence brooded everywhere as we stood expectant and watchful. I glanced at Leachman; he stood motionless, a tall, lean figure, his hands behind his back, grasping a short thick stick, and in his unwinking eye, a look of stern defiance. His jaw was set tight, for I could see the taut muscles standing out.

He was no longer the man whom most men knew ; he was seemingly another, a man of steel, unflinching, calm and, for the first time, I fully realized the reason for his almost miraculous power over the wild men he controlled. Yet even then, I confess, I doubted whether Jiza'a would come forth from the midst of his 500 armed followers, as directed, and inwardly I wondered what our fate might be. A few more breathless seconds, which anxiety stretched out to leaden minutes, and then suddenly I spied a shuffling, stumbling figure, dodging in and out of the tents, and hurrying nervously in our direction.

Having cleared the camp, he made straight for Leachman, and when a few feet distant, shrieked :

"Dakhailak, dakhailak, your protection, your protection."

Leachman sprang forward like a wild cat, and seized him by both wrists. He swung him back and forth, rocking him on his heels. "Mën Leachman, eh? Who is Leachman, eh?" he bawled, and Jiza'a kept wailing, "Dakhailak, Dakhailak."

A fierce warrior turned craven.

"Get hold of him," said Leachman to me, "and into the car with him."

He bundled him into the back seat, and I sprang in beside him and clasped him by the wrists, while Leachman sprang into the driver's seat and put the car in motion. Suddenly, without the slightest warning, Jiza'a, maddened by fear, with amazing agility threw his legs over his head and turned a back somersault out of the car.

"Stop," I yelled to Leachman. I leapt out and raced after the fugitive, and he, being encumbered by his thick clothing and aba, made slow progress, so I easily caught him up and collared him low, in the



LEACHMAN SEIZING JIZA'A.



way I had learnt at Rugby football. In a few seconds we had him back in the car again, but this time on the floor, and I sat upon him, pressing my weight down upon him.

From my perch upon the sheikh I looked backwards as we raced towards our armoured cars.

The Arab camp still lacked all signs of movement, save at some distance, I spied a woman, ugly and old-looking, running along, her arms outstretched in supplication, calling the name of her Lord Jiza'a, her beloved, the only soul in all that camp to venture aught on his behalf; a frail old woman whom love made unafraid.

Jiza'a was handcuffed, and placed with two British Tommies for a guard into the Ford van whose driver was told to go straight to Baghdad.

How strange the contrast. The fierce warrior supported by 500 rifles, his bowels turned to water, shrieking his surrender, his following paralysed by fear into impotence, a shrivelled hag ennobled by her love, endeavouring, through her devotion, the only attempt at rescue.

The two armoured cars were useless. The Arabs had but to line the brow of the hill to be behind perfect cover. The cars could advance no nearer, and, at the distance at which they were, would have been of small use, either for providing protection or as a menace. In any case, it was not the cars, but Leachman who forced Jiza'a to issue forth, and who made cowards of his following.

In this manner, I saw a single unarmed man hold 500 fighting men in abject subjection.

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I thought our day's adventuring done, but it soon

appeared to be otherwise. Leachman got into his car and turned it towards the south, making, as I soon saw, for the main Anaizah encampment. Once more ill fortune attended the armoured cars, and we reached the centre of the vast encampment with an original six reduced to one. It seemed ridiculous to halt there, as we eventually did, in the middle of that / hive of Arab tents, which stretched away beyond our vision to the north and south.

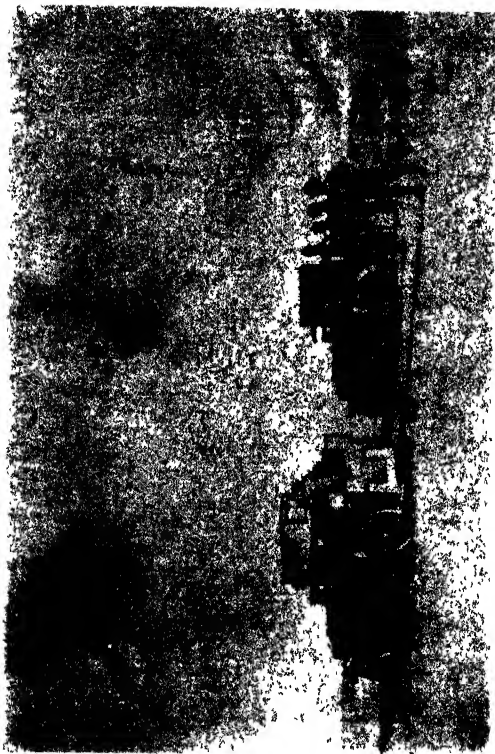
Leachman seemed to know where Fahad Bey's deputy had his tent, and stayed our progress within a few yards of a tent slightly larger and, in a measure, less sombre than its fellows.

Once more he sent his messenger to bid a sheikh attend him, but thirty seconds were sufficient to compel him forth. Leachman ordered him sternly to bid the whole tribe retire at once into the desert whence they came. He stretched his arm out, and pointed a long, bony finger to the inhospitable waste to give his words more emphasis. The sheikh sullenly refused.

"I will give you a quarter of an hour to say 'Rahla' "—the word of command which sets a tribe upon the move—and Leachman told him what he had done to Jiza'a. He promised that if he did not obey, he would share Jiza'a's fate.

"Allah Karim—God is merciful," said Leachman sternly, "a quarter of an hour I give you to obey. If in that time you say not 'Rahla,' I will open fire upon your camp, and shoot you to bits."

Conceive of one machine gun, which could have been overwhelmed in one rush, shooting ten, or maybe fifteen thousand men to bits, when they were spread out over seven or eight miles of country! I expected to see the sheikh laugh his derision! But



LEACHMAN (FOURTH FROM RIGHT) WATCHING JIZA'A'S ENCAMPMENT
AFTER HIS CAPTURE.

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he was far from laughing ; his brows were contracted in a deep scowl.

“ By God, no,” he said.

Leachman told me to seize him, and make him sit upon the ground by his car, and this I did by gentle suasion, so as not to goad him to frenzy, or his following to action. I took my seat beside him in the dust of the road, and there he sat as the minutes dragged by. He kept his head lowered on his breast, his fingers kept drumming upon his knees, and as I watched those restless fingers I wondered, in breathless suspense, whether this proud chieftain of ten thousand would, nay, could, obey so humiliating a command, or whether he would bid defiance, and call his men to attack.

So the minutes dragged by, and Leachman strolled unconcernedly up and down before the line, idly flicking at the grasses with his cane, unmindful of the baleful glances shot at him from a hundred pairs of fierce eyes.

Once more a woman came boldly to her lord, and seating herself beside him, called him—“ Azizi—my dear one,” and counselled obedience. The sheikh never so much as glanced at her. He uttered no word, and only the continued drumming of his fingers showed his agitation.

After a time, Leachman turned to me.

“ How much of the time is gone ? ” he asked.

“ Eleven minutes,” I answered.

Once more Leachman’s calmness left him. He stood over the sheikh.

“ Four minutes yet remain, and if they pass without your obeying, I open fire.” Then “ Qul Rahla—say depart,” he shouted at him.

For yet two minutes more the sheikh remained

obdurate, and our fate hung by a hair, and I can still feel the tenseness of those moments, in which I could sense the bitter struggle between pride and fear going on in the sheikh's heart, and I can see those silent, sullen men of his standing motionless, awaiting their chief's decision.

Then, with but a few seconds remaining, he suddenly sprang to his feet, and in a voice hoarse and rattling, croaked his submission.

"Rahla." The fateful word was uttered in agony, as if it had been torn from his breast, and yet once more he repeated in a lower voice "Rahla." The word was taken up and passed along, and within twenty minutes the dust of incoming camels was everywhere visible, and the black tents were falling in rapid succession, and when at night I passed that way, the road was deserted, and a peaceful silence rested over the whole land. As I rode I marvelled that the spirit of one man could so prevail over a host, and that his unaided courage could drive back the forces of disorder into the inhospitable desert.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CAPTURE OF SHIFATAH

THE palm trees surround Kerbela almost to the edge of the desert, which stretches to the borders of Palestine.

The desert here, however, is not a sandy one, like those great wastes of the Sahara, but an undulating plain with thick scrub interspersed with camel-thorn, and deeply-cut by ravines and wadis.

Forty miles to the west on this rolling plain there is situated an oasis consisting of three hundred thousand palm trees, for that number has been counted for taxation purposes.

In the midst of this oasis, which is indeed a little paradise wherein roses bloom abundantly, and beneath the palms is spread a thick carpet of grass and luscious lucerne, are scattered in diverse places the Arab dwellings of mud, whilst in the midst of it lies the little town itself.

It is built round an underground river, which here suddenly bursts forth, and pours out an abundant supply of blue-tinted, but otherwise crystal-clear water ; in its rush to freedom, it has forced up the ground like a miniature crater, over which it falls in a foaming cascade, whose strength never varies, and forms a swiftly-flowing stream which winds with happy murmuring, as if joying in its liberty from confinement, amongst the palms and lucerne.

Then, after showing its gratitude for its short freedom by creating abundance, it disappears into the desert as suddenly as it broke forth.

Leachman and I tried to plumb its sparkling depth, but, with the only means at our disposal, long strands of wire, we were unable to touch the bottom at one thousand one hundred feet. Possibly, the weight which we attached to the end of our wire was swept along by the force of some underground current, but in any case, it springs from a prodigious depth.

Cooled and refreshed by this stream, Shifatah lies on the caravan route between Damascus and Kerbela, and, in times of peace, the caravans rest here the night, both on their outward and inward journeys, so that the centre of the township is provided with a fairly large square, where all the camels may be unloaded, fed and rested; whilst round the square are lodging houses to provide shelter and food for the more wealthy of the merchants and travellers.

The square is approached on the east by a narrow street, about a quarter of a mile in length, and ten feet in breadth, hemmed in by mud-built, flat-roofed houses.

Army headquarters received information that Shifatah was being used by the Turks as a depot from which to supply arms to those tribesmen who were hostile to the British, and as a centre from which their spies could be sent out in all directions.

It was governed by a pro-Turk party, which, being utterly opposed to the British, made these activities secure.

In this manner Shifatah was made a stronghold for the Turkish cause, and one which they hoped lay well outside the power of British interference.

Indeed, it was difficult of access for the British. It lay on the Turkish right flank, and to send a small expedition there would have been a hazardous undertaking, since it lay far beyond the field of British operations.

It was a thorn in our side, and British headquarters were in a dilemma as to how to deal with the situation.

In their difficulty they sent for Leachman, and asked him for his advice. Leachman agreed that to send an expedition, even if the men, arms, cars, and guns could be spared, would present a multitude of difficulties.

He said that the matter must be dealt with in a different manner. He said that he would see what could be done and would later report, and smiling enigmatically upon them, took his leave.

Leaving army headquarters he travelled straight to Kerbela, and there picked up his faithful servant, Hussein, and together, these two intrepid companions set out by car alone across the desert.

On approaching Shifatah, they were received by a straggling fire directed upon them from the roof-tops, for their approach had been observed some distance away.

Leachman therefore abandoned his conveyance, and ordering Hussein to remain in it, he approached the town alone, on foot.

They shot at him wildly, making poor aim, yet near enough to halt most men ; but Leachman did not hurry his approach beyond his usual rapid gait, which his spindly legs habituated him to take.

The shots of his nervous opponents went astray, and he reached the entrance to the town miraculously unscathed.

Here one, leaning over the parapet of the roof, took a hurried shot at him. Leachman, putting his hand into his pocket, drew out a Mills bomb, and extracting the pin, tossed it onto the roof. Four seconds having elapsed, its violent detonation not only blew the sniper to bits, but ended all resistance, for no one knew how many more bombs he might possess, and they were totally unused to this form of missile, whose roar promised unimaginable destruction.

Leachman then proceeded to the centre square of the town, and in a loud voice summoned the town council immediately to attend him.

This they did furtively, and with hangdog expressions and surly looks. Having assembled them, he ordered them to sit down upon the ground, to which most of them were ill-accustomed, many of them being men of position and used to a more comfortable method of repose, while the whole populace assembled and viewed with astonishment the debasement of those who were their governors.

Leachman then called out the names of two of his friends, whom he had met in previous years, and they replied at his elbow, having hastened thither as soon as they recognized his lanky form.

Turning to the government seated upon the ground, he informed them that they were dismissed from office, and, turning to his two friends, appointed one to be Rais al Beladiyah, and the other his assistant, these he instructed to form a new town council from among the number of their friends, which they joyously did. In twenty minutes this council was appointed. He then instructed them as their first duty, to collect all weapons of offence and have them brought to the square, which being

done, he redistributed them amongst those known to be his friends, and friends of his friends.

Having in this manner changed the Government and disbanded the army, and formed a new Government and an "army," friendly disposed, he rounded up all those known to be pro-Turkish, and ordered them to leave the place forthwith, or swear loyalty to the new régime.

He remained in Shifatah until the town was secure for British interests, and then quietly took his departure; merely reporting to headquarters that Shifatah was no longer pro-Turk.

Later, during one of his visits to Kerbela, being anxious as to the position of affairs in Shifatah, which his many duties had prevented him from visiting for some time, so that the virus of Turkish intrigue once more began to permeate the unstable minds of its inhabitants, he decided to visit it.

He asked me to accompany him there while he more firmly established our friends, and in order to enable me to become acquainted with a town of some importance to my own charge.

Leachman drove his Dodge car, in which Hussein, his servant, occupied the back seat; and his escort, on this occasion, consisted of a Ford van and two shabana, but these I later discovered were for my safety, not his own, since he later ordered them to escort me back to Kerbela.

It was a beautiful day when we set forth. There was nothing to interrupt our view of the distant horizon, so that travelling fast out into the open space was exhilarating.

It was on this occasion, when passing some mounds, that Leachman told me the story of his first meeting with Fahad Beg. A few miles farther

on, a brilliant white line stretched across our right front ; this he told me was a river of salt, over which camels might safely pass at certain seasons, but in which the gazelle often get entrapped.

He told me how he had crossed it for the first time on one of his journeys, and I asked him to tell me some particulars of this, but he, suddenly thinking that he had been talking too much of himself, lapsed into a moody silence, out of which I was unable to entice him.

He drove at a furious speed, which the uneven nature of the ground in no way caused him to abate. When Hussein's cap was blown off by the violence of the wind which his mad speed created, he did not stop, but proceeding at the same speed, made a great circle in the desert until he came once more up to the cap, and, quickly applying the brakes, he instructed his servant to pick it up, which he having done, Leachman continued his mad career towards our destination.

When we reached Shifatah, we were strolling together down the narrow street already described, when an old hag suddenly appeared from a side opening.

On seeing Leachman she stopped dead, as if she could hardly believe her eyes, then raising skinny arms to heaven, poured forth a stream of words in a high-pitched and cracked voice.

Leachman lengthened his stride, and hurried past the old dame, and she followed in his wake, but her feeble limbs being unable to emulate his more vigorous progress, the distance between them rapidly increased, yet she continued her invocations so long as he remained in view.

" What is biting her ? " I asked Leachman.

"Oh, she is mad and is cursing me," said he in a surly voice.

But he forgot I knew Arabic, and the words that she was uttering were not curses, but the blessings of Allah which she called down upon him.

When we were out of hearing : "Forgive me," he said, "I have several things to attend to. Can you amuse yourself for half an hour?" which I did by making inquiries as to the taking of Shifatah by Leachman, and the queer behaviour of the old Arab woman.

With regard to her, I found that she was the mother of the young man who had shot at Leachman at the taking of the town, and whom he had blown to pieces with his Mills bomb, in order to save his own life, and to win Shifatah.

This old lady, with lamentations, had told Leachman of her loss on that occasion ; a loss, for her, more desperate than for others since she was a widow, and the boy her only support.

So Leachman, in order to retrieve in some measure the harm which he had unintentionally done, out of his own salary pensioned her off, nor did he ever visit Shifatah without bringing something to add to her comfort and consolation.

Indeed, on this occasion, I discovered a bundle in the Ford van, containing provisions and two warm blankets, which he had brought to protect her feeble body against the chills of the coming winter.

Regarding my discoveries I held my peace, nor mentioned a word to my friend, knowing that he would feel it ill if he knew that I had learnt of these facts.

But it gave me a wonderful insight into the nature of the man. On the one hand his intrepidity in

action, his fearlessness in any danger, and the awe which he inspired in a hostile nation. On the other, hidden beneath his rough exterior and sarcastic speech a great and compassionate heart. Later, when I knew him better still, I learnt that the harshness and inflexibility he showed towards the Bedouin was an invention to protect himself and guard the interests of his country. It was contrary to his true nature, which rebelled against his adoption of it. I learnt, too, what a terrible strain it was to him to maintain it and I can still hear him saying quietly, when he was ill in London :

“ They want me to go out again; do you know, I think I am losing my nerve for I feel certain they (the Arabs) will get me one day.”

“ Well, need you really go ? ” I asked.

“ Why, of course,” he replied, “ they want me out there.” And he went, but he went as he knew he would, to his death.

For he was foully murdered at Khan Nuqta in 1920. Yet one more tale remains to be told of this little town of Shifatah.

During the rebellion of 1920, the town once more fell into the hands of the hostile elements, who set a trap against Leachman's coming.

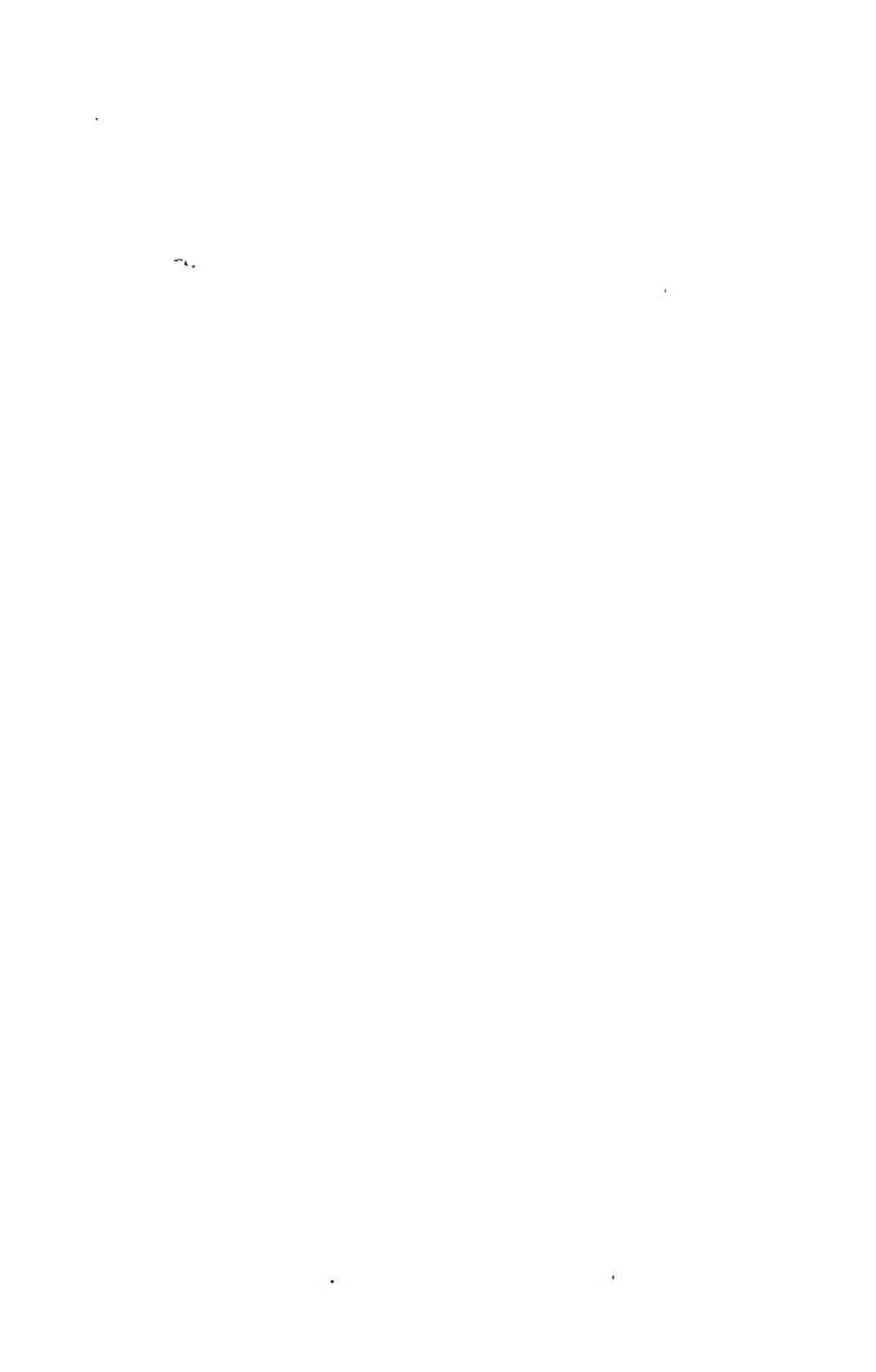
Having sent him urgent messages, purporting to come from our well-wishers, that his presence was required to stave off a disaster, they carefully made preparations to encompass his death.

They barricaded the square of the town, and had a hundred rifles prepared to pour in, at the psychological moment, a hail of lead.

The narrow entrance was to be barred in his rear as soon as he entered the square in his car. All preparations having been made, they awaited his



SHIFATAH — "COOLED AND REFRESHED BY THIS STREAM, SHIFATAH
LIES ON THE ROAD BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND KERBELA."



arrival with confidence, believing that they could now murder him at their ease.

Leachman came, as they expected that he would do in answer to the appeal, as he would think, of his friends.

He drove on unsuspectingly to the square. When halfway down the narrow street already alluded to, some uncanny sense warned him of his danger. He knew death lurked near. Acting as he always did, in a flash, and favoured by Providence, he turned his car down one of the few narrow alleys which entered the street.

It could barely pass, but it was just wide enough to allow him to make his escape, and those lying in ambush were momentarily thrown into confusion by his sudden action ; nevertheless, a fusillade of shots followed him as he drove madly for an exit of the village.

By good luck, none of the many bullets which struck his car caused sufficient damage to stay his progress, or take his life.

So Leachman passed away from Shifatah for the last time, his departure signalled, as his first coming had been, by a hail of lead.

CHAPTER XV

THE DELIVERANCE OF KERBELA

To govern Mesopotamia is a complicated business, as the Turks found out, and not least on account of the constitution of its population. The Bedouin roams the whole length of the western edge of the cultivated area, only too anxious to improve his own poor circumstances by any pickings there may be, or to take advantage of any temporary disturbance which might take place to add to his armament or flocks. On the outlying parts of the cultivated area itself or in the almost inaccessible marshes which cover the southern area are the so-called settled Arab tribes, half savage still, with their predatory instincts barely suppressed. They are fully armed and are likewise ready to take advantage of any civil disturbance or military upheavals. The population of the towns is mixed, being partly Arab and partly Persian, with a fair sprinkling of other Oriental peoples, professing many different kinds of religion. The form of government, therefore, has to be extremely elastic.

Between the settled Arabs and the townsmen there exists an implacable hatred. The former regard the dweller of the town as one worth small consideration, whose manly qualities have been sapped by easy living and licentious ways, and they long to lay greedy hands on the wealth which these

"degenerates" have amassed. On the other hand, the townsmen regard the settled Arab as he does the Bedouin, as a man of little education and less manners, and as one who is nearly allied to the beasts of the field.

Kerbela, being one of the holy cities, has many treasures in its mosques, well stocked market places and many wealthy citizens amongst the number of its inhabitants. It lies isolated from its fellows, surrounded by a sea of tribesmen who dream ever of the plunder of those riches they see displayed before their greedy eyes when they visit the town to make their meagre purchases.

In Turkish times the Ottoman Government kept a brigade of cavalry and a battery of artillery in the town to keep these desires in check, but when the ebb of the Turkish armies flowed slowly north and north-west, Kerbela was left alone. There was no sign of any British forces coming to take over the control lately exercised by the Turkish brigade. And "by Allah! so happy an opportunity must not be wasted," thought the settled Arabs, and they massed amongst its palm groves and encircled the town with a view to capturing and looting it. Urgent news was sent, therefore, to the British authorities at Baghdad for assistance, and speedy assistance, to prevent the ruin of the town.

As usual Leachman was hastily summoned and consulted as to what should be done. He said he would approach as near to the town as possible and find out exactly what the situation was before offering his advice. And so, armed with a decapitated polo-stick, and accompanied by his faithful servant, he set off on his mission of inquiry.

When he neared the town he could hear the

desultory fire of the Arab tribesmen who had just commenced their assault upon the city, which was but ill-defended and like to fall an easy prey to their attack. There was no time in which to obtain military assistance for, long before such assistance could possibly have reached Kerbela, the city would have fallen. Leachman, therefore, walked boldly into the palm groves which concealed the attackers, and, on reaching their straggling battle-line, demanded of one, who was firing wildly at some distant objective, to tell him who the sheikh was who commanded, and where he was situated. The gunman turned an excited and bloodshot eye upon him and grunted out some term of abuse, and then continued his occupation. Leachman smote his recumbent form a "sounding wallop," which occasioned him to give a more heeding ear to his request for information. Regretfully and sullenly the man obeyed and led Leachman to an individual who was as heartily engaged in firing as his henchman had been. Poking him with his stick, Leachman ordered him to cease forthwith and bid his followers do likewise, and retire from the gardens and go back to their villages. The man refused. Whereupon Leachman gave a sign to his servant Hussein, who suddenly leaping upon the sheikh, cast him violently to the ground and seated himself upon his shoulders. Leachman then proceeded to belabour the bare legs of the sheikh, bidding him between the strokes give the word to cease fighting, and retire. For long the sheikh remained obdurate but, eventually, his calves being less inured to pain than his will to obstinacy, he shouted out the necessary order and Leachman desisting, bade him rise and depart, he and all that belonged to him. Having gone some fifteen yards

distant, however, the sheikh, not to be lightly dragged away from so near a prospect of obtaining plunder, repented of his instructions and shouted to his followers, who had regretfully abandoned the conflict, to return and continue it ; whereupon Hussein made a rush at him and again cast him on the ground, and once more Leachman began to belabour him. The sheikh's fortitude was amazing, or his calves benumbed, for the beating lasted so long that Leachman's arm was rapidly tiring, and he told me that if the sheikh had managed to hold out but a minute longer he would have been forced to desist. Luckily for him and for the citizens of the town the sheikh had reached the end of his resistance and he shouted once more the order to retire. This time he did not rescind it, and his followers, with downcast countenances, followed him from the palm groves into the open plain.

In this manner Leachman saved Kerbela.

Possibly those unused to wild places and their wilder peoples will consider Leachman's treatment brutal, as it certainly was, and one which under normal circumstances could not be condoned, but whatever our opinion of his action may be, we are left in wonder at the indomitable courage he displayed. When the Arab is heated with the lust of battle he is, at best, a dangerous element ; he becomes like a man intoxicated, his eyes take on the fixed look of the fanatic, he loses control of his senses. Under these conditions, he is oblivious to risk and regardless of danger, or of what may befall him or others. When victory might reward him with abundant loot, he becomes like one possessed. It is hard then to credit the cool daring of Leachman, not only in the manner in which he exposed himself

in the general mêlée, but at his temerity in seizing the leader from the midst of his men and beating him in the battle line itself. One wonders how it was that the sheikh, instead of ordering his men to cease firing, did not order them to shoot Leachman dead.

Leachman owed his uncanny sway over the wild men, for whose conduct he was responsible, to the insolent daring he displayed on such, and similar occasions. By showing no quailing, however imminent the danger, or overwhelming the odds, he invariably quelled the savage instincts of his assailants, making of them mere children. The fact, too, that he, apparently, bore a charmed life, and that many had attempted to murder him without success, gave him a sort of legendary inviolability which made the task of harming him appear to be beyond human power. The contempt, too, with which Leachman treated all attempts on his life had a tremendous moral effect upon those who would have liked to have emulated others, but were debarred for the reasons given. As an example, two years later than the incident just recorded, Leachman, who was then political officer at Mosul, had occasion to travel down to the south to regain touch with the Anaizah. His intended departure became known to his enemies who likewise knew the route he was to travel. Two men were deputed to lie in ambush for him at a narrow spot on the track by which he was to travel, and where an out-crop of rock permitted his assailants to remain concealed. In due course Leachman, driving his car, approached and when but a few yards distant, they both shot at him at point blank range. By some miracle the bullets went just wide of their mark, although his windscreen was shattered. Most people under

these circumstances, I think it may be fairly said, would have put their foot down on the accelerator and increased the distance between themselves and their assailants with the greatest possible speed. Not so Leachman. His spirit at once rebelled at such treatment and his rage knew no bounds. He braked the car violently and, jumping out, ran up the ridge, which concealed his assailants, bellowing like an enraged bull, seized one of those who had shot at him and beat him with his own rifle which he snatched from his palsied hands, which having done, he flung the rifle back at him, and contemptuously turning his back on him, went down the hill, got into his car and drove calmly away !

There is little doubt that when these men took aim at Leachman, subconsciously, fear gripped their hearts so that their aim, as in so many other instances, went astray, and, when they saw that indeed they had not harmed him, they became to all intents and purposes bereft of their senses, and expecting nothing but death from the man they had hoped to harm, became paralysed with fear.

News of this incident quickly spread throughout the country and was, and is, no doubt, still talked of as one of those miraculous happenings which seemed to envelop his life.

But there dawned a day when Providence withdrew its protection—for his work was finished—and he was foully murdered ; being shot in the back by the son of a sheikh he was upbraiding in 1920. It was only fitting that his faithful and brave companion and servant, Hussein, should suffer the same fate. Thus, together, they crossed the Great Divide unafraid.

The sacrifice of Leachman's life was predestined and inevitable—he himself knew it. If ever a man

went deliberately to his death it was this very gallant soldier. One man cannot forever hold thousands in subjection. The methods he employed were certain, sooner or later, to bring full retribution upon him. Against his desires, and contrary to his true character, he used the only weapon he possessed to maintain the peace—a seeming brutality exhibited with unflinching courage. If he struck, and struck hard, the occasion demanded it. But there are many who can testify to his far more frequent gentleness and kindness.

England asked him to perform a necessary, indeed, a vital task. She provided him with small means for its performance. He made himself, therefore, a super man, and offered himself a perpetual sacrifice to fate ; and fate withheld its hand until his task was completed, and then accepted his sacrifice.

A pity—a pity that Leachman was not permitted to use his wonderful gifts in cementing friendship and increasing understanding between his own countrymen and his friends the Arabs, for they *were* his friends.

Leachman sleeps in Baghdad, but I can always picture him standing up before the host of the Anaizah, a lean, determined figure with arm outstretched, pointing out to the desert and bidding them begone ; and surely his gallant spirit still hovers there, between the desert and the sown, keeping the peace.

CHAPTER XVI

IBN SA'UD, KING OF SAUDI ARABIA

KING IBN SA'UD is the fifth descendant of the Emir Mohammed Ibn Sa'ud, the founder of the Sa'ud dynasty and the close friend and supporter of the Sheikh Mohamed Ibn Abdul Wahab, the great religious revivalist, who, emigrating to Diriyya, the capital of Sa'ud, in 1736, inspired him with his religious ideals.

Previous to this date Nedjd was ruled by many Emirs, and the Sa'uds had no greater influence than any other rulers. The rivalries of the different emirs had perpetuated chaos and disorder and the land was submerged in poverty and distress.

The association between Abdul Wahab and Sa'ud raised the latter to a pre-eminent position, and the House of Sa'ud increased in influence, till, forty years later, Sa'ud had completed the work begun by his grandfather and established his rule over a new kingdom stretching from the borders of Syria in the north to Sana in the south ; and from Oman in the east to the Red Sea littoral in the west.

Under his rule the new kingdom enjoyed peace and tranquillity, justice and freedom were firmly established.

The simultaneous rise of this infant kingdom, deriving its strength from its renewed religious faith, with that of Egypt under Mahomet Ali, caused the Turkish Government extreme alarm.

The Ottoman Government spared no efforts to set these two states at variance with each other.

By intrigue, and by the employment of every cunning artifice, they so embittered the feelings between them, that an outbreak of hostilities followed as a natural consequence.

The resulting war lasted for five years, and terminated with the capture of Diriyya in 1815. Sa'ud was taken as a prisoner to Egypt, the town was razed to the ground, and its palm groves destroyed. How futile ! How ill-imagined ! Human grief finds consolation from the passing hours. The poor prostrated vegetation, the shattered walls, fall into soon-forgotten dust. But memory lingers, and a wrong survives the passing of succeeding generations until it is redressed, and the final act of retribution levied with the accumulated interest of revenge. So this wanton action added to the score against the Turk and contributed to their final overthrow.

At the time, however, this catastrophe to the House of Sa'ud resulted in a transient revival of Turkish influence over the Arabian Peninsula ; an influence due, not to healthy sovereignty and to virile strength, but to a canker of vile intrigue, subterfuge and bribery, which was destined finally to eat away the limbs and tissues of a once vigorous nation, and leave it a dismembered and decaying wreck.

For the moment, however, the Turks, having succeeded in the wider issue, continued the process of disintegration by inciting one chieftain against another, so that the country itself was rent by family and tribal feuds, and a swift-flowing and turbulent current of chaos and misery once again flooded the land.

The family of Sa'ud was swept into the general

HIS MAJESTY KING IBN SA'UD



"TO THE FRIEND OF THE ARABS
MAJOR BRAY,
BY COMMAND OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING,

1ST SEPTEMBER, 1934."

maelstrom of disorder. The universal spirit of intrigue and hate permeated the different sections of this princely clan.

Toorky, grandson of Mohammed Ibn Sa'ud, went to Riyadh in 1818, but was killed by one of his cousins in 1831. His death was quickly avenged by his son Feisal, grandfather of the present King, who was elected Emir the following year. While still engaged in consolidating his position by suppressing his rivals, Khershid Pasha, the Egyptian general, successfully intervened in the dispute and Feisal was taken prisoner to Egypt.

In 1841, however, he escaped from that country, regained his throne and, after disposing of all other rivals, restored the old kingdom—with the exception of the Hedjaz, which he was unable to reconquer—to its former state. His reign is still remembered for its affluence, prosperity and universal justice.

On his death, his two sons set themselves in unnatural conflict with each other for the rulership, and the Shummar family, under its Chieftain, Ibn Rashid, and the Ottoman Government, seized the opportunity which this fratricidal conflict gave them, once more to conquer Nedjd, and by 1888 the whole Emirate was placed under the control of the Shummar Chief.

The Emir Abdul Rahman, father of the present king, feeling it to be beneath his dignity to remain in Riyadh, then being governed by an agent of Ibn Rashid, and being unsuccessful in his attempts to persuade the Turkish Government to appoint him governor, emigrated in 1889 with his family and many members of his clan to Koweit, where they endeavoured to exist on an allowance of £60 a month, paid by the Ottoman Government with its usual unpunctuality.

Such then was the heritage of the young Prince when, as a boy of eleven, he shared the exile of his father.

Although at this early age he had experienced nothing but adversity and misfortune, nevertheless, instead of accepting his apparent luckless and hopeless state as inevitable, his indomitable spirit proved true to his descent, his instincts urged him to action, and his deep religious faith prompted him to accept the challenge of circumstance.

Indeed, it seems that by these early vicissitudes, and those soon to follow, Providence was fashioning him for its needs. His limbs were being steeled and moulded by progressive toilsome exercise ; his stamina was increased by forced privations ; his natural courage was fortified by the conquest of almost insuperable difficulties. Moreover, his faith was justified by his salvation from countless perils, and his heart made compassionate by his own sufferings.

In 1895, Sheikh Mobaruk al Sabah became the chieftain of Koweit. His promotion was the signal for trouble culminating in war between him and Ibn Rashid. This outbreak of hostilities gave Ibn Sa'ud, then a boy of only fifteen, the opportunity for which he had been patiently waiting. He hastily raised an armed contingent and participated in the fighting as an ally of al Sabah, and in 1899 reconquered Riyadh. The fighting, unluckily for him, ended in the defeat of his friend and ally, al Sabah, whose overthrow forced him to abandon Riyadh and to retire once more to Koweit.

This setback by no means discouraged him. In 1901, two years later, he left Koweit with forty men whom he had recruited from his clan, al Sa'ud, and set out into the desert, where he was joined by those

Bedouin welcoming an opportunity for pillage and plunder. With these uncertain elements he set forth upon his quest. His immediate objective was to alienate the Bedouin tribes owing allegiance to Ibn Rashid.

His aptitude for leadership soon enticed under his command a force of a thousand infantry and four hundred horsemen. With this contingent he moved to Southern Nedjd, whose people were more loyal to him and therefore more likely to rally to him; moreover, their territory was far removed from Hail, Ibn Rashid's capital, an obvious advantage to one engaged upon so risky an undertaking.

Ibn Rashid, in spite of his young rival's small following, viewed these proceedings with the greatest apprehension, and having successfully appealed for help from the Turks, marched on Koweit.

The situation of Sa'ud was now extremely serious. So far he had pitted himself against an Arab chieftain, but the active response of the Turks to the latter's appeal brought him up against an empire.

The Turks cut off his supplies from the province of Hasa, and stopped the allowance which his father received, thus trying to strike at him through his filial love and duty. His father and his friend, the Sheikh of Koweit, both entreated him to abandon his enterprise and to return to Koweit, saying that he could never hope to survive the combined forces of Ibn Rashid and the Turkish Empire. To add to the apparent hopelessness of his mission, the seemingly overwhelming odds against him caused all those Bedouin who had joined his standard to desert him with cowardly haste, and he was left with his original small band of forty kinsmen.

If the task he had set himself had seemed formid-

able before, his pursuit of it now seemed likely to sweep him into oblivion. But Ibn Sa'ud was neither intimidated by the forces arrayed against him, nor dismayed by the seeming hopelessness of his situation. On the contrary, his very weakness enabled him to undertake a stroke totally unexpected in its boldness, complete in its success, and devastating in its consequences.

Persuading twenty more bold spirits to join him—bringing the total number of his followers to sixty—he set out for the walled city of Riyadh.

He left twenty of his following two hours' march from the town, and reached Shamsieh, the garden suburb, at nightfall. Here he left concealed thirty-three of his men under the leadership of his brother Mohamed. With the remaining six, selected for their intrepid courage and coolness, he made for the walls of the town.

Cutting down a palm tree, they provided themselves with a scaling ladder, which permitted them to surmount the walls and to enter the town.

They made stealthily in the concealing darkness for a house next to that of Ajlan, the Governor of Riyadh. They knocked on the door, and were answered by a female demanding their business. "Some of the servants of the Emir Ajlan sent to summon your husband," Sa'ud replied.

"Begone, you wretch," answers the woman, "you must certainly be up to some mischief, or you would not come knocking at peoples' doors at this time of night."

"No, my good woman, I assure you," Ibn Sa'ud replied, "but I warn you that unless your husband appears before Emir Ajlan without delay, nothing will save him from death in the morning."

Her husband, overhearing this ominous prediction, came out to find out what it was all about.

Ibn Sa'ud knew him and his womenfolk well. As soon as he appeared at the door, Ibn Sa'ud seized him and commanded him to absolute silence if he did not want to be killed instantly, and, pushing him inside, entered the house with him.

When the women saw him they cried, "Our Master, Abdul Aziz"—the name by which Ibn Sa'ud is known to his people—He gathered them all together and, locking them in one room, commanded them to maintain strict silence on pain of death.

He then climbed the wall of Ajlan's house which adjoined the citadel. Here he found two men asleep whom he rolled up in their bedding and locked in one of the empty rooms. These preparations having been completed with swift decision, he sent one of his party to fetch his brother Mahomed and his men from Shamsieh. They reached him unnoticed by any in the slumbering town.

With ten men he then searched Ajlan's house, room by room, hoping to find the man himself. In one of the rooms he saw the forms of two people asleep in bed; he at once conceived them to be Ajlan and his wife. Going closely up to them to make sure of their identity, the rays of the lamp held by one of the servants showed them to be Ajlan's wife and her sister. The former, waking up, recognized Ibn Sa'ud, and asked if it were not indeed he. On his answering in the affirmative:

"Whom do you want and what is your mission here?" she asked.

"I want Ajlan and nobody else," he replied. The woman counselled him, "My son, do not gamble

with your life. Flee while the night is still young, or they will surely kill you."

"We have not come here to listen to your advice," he said, "but we want to know when Ajlan will come forth from the main palace."

"An hour after sunrise," was her reply.

"That is all we need to know and, if you and your sister remain quiet, no harm will befall you, but if you try to make any noise you will surely die."

Here again, all the women having been collected together, they were locked in one room. All this was done before midnight in the absolute quiet of the city's sleep. Ibn Sa'ud and his companions then quietly awaited the dawn, and, hardly had the sun climbed over the horizon, than the palace doors opened and slaves issued forth leading horses into the sunshine. In a few moments Ajlan himself came out to inspect them. Ibn Sa'ud and his men rushed out on him. Startled by this sudden attack, Ajlan tried to regain the Palace, but was fired on and wounded by Ibn Sa'ud, who then chased him and grappled with him.

By this time Ajlan's men had recovered from the panic into which they had been thrown, and began to fire on Ibn Sa'ud's small band from the windows of the Palace, killing two, wounding four, and causing the others to retreat.

At this critical moment, Abdulla Ibn Jilur, Ibn Sa'ud's cousin, reached the scene of action and shot Ajlan dead, and his men feeling certain that this totally unexpected attack was being carried out by a far larger force than was actually the case surrendered, and by midday Ibn Sa'ud was proclaimed ruler of Riyadh.

When the news reached Ibn Rashid, he said :

"The poor fool ! He is like a bird which has flown into a snare."

But Ibn Sa'ud was too astute to allow himself to be shut up in Riyadh.

Putting the defences of the city into proper order, and organizing its garrison, he left Riyadh in the care of one of his relations, and himself went out into the desert with a picked body of men.

In desert warfare the strength of an army ebbs and flows with the turn of fortune. Ibn Sa'ud's successes encouraged a corresponding increase of adherents. Gradually his army multiplied, its numbers were doubled, then trebled ; gradually, too, he expanded his territory. First, he captured the Province of Riyadh, then that of Al Kharj, and when he had annexed the whole region south of Nedjd, he set his face to the north, gradually and methodically depriving Al Rashid of his territory south of Hail. Rashid himself was killed in 1905 in battle near Kassim, upon which, the Al Rashid family, instead of uniting to defend their possessions, quarrelled among themselves.

The most critical time in Ibn Sa'ud's career was, perhaps, in 1907, when, in addition to the assault delivered by his hereditary enemy, Rashid, he was attacked by his own cousins in Al Hariq in the south, by the Sherif Hussein in the west, while the Turks attacked him from Kassim. He was therefore hemmed in by his implacable foes.

Ibn Sa'ud, clearly recognizing the fact that if he could eliminate his strongest opponent he would have a comparatively easy task against the weaker ones, marched first against the Turks, and inflicted upon them a decisive defeat. After his victory he

treated his captives with kindness and generosity, and facilitated their return by camel to Baghdad and Medina.

He then turned on his cousins, and, having defeated them, he forgave them their active hostility against himself, and treated them also with the greatest forbearance and indulgence.

The Sherif Hussein, hearing of these successes, retreated into the Hedjaz.

Into the fierce desert warfare, therefore, Ibn Sa'ud introduced a new morality, that of mercy in the hour of victory. His treatment of his vanquished foes, indeed, shows more clearly than does anything else his confidence in himself and in his future. His determination to ignore the almost universal practice amongst oriental princes and peoples of exterminating all possible rivals, which all expected and none now experienced, at once raised him above the common herd, disarmed resentment and enthroned mercy.

The Arab was quick to recognize the difference between the past and the present, and responded by giving their new master loyalty and devotion.

Ibn Sa'ud has been consistent in his determination to suppress the old spirit of vindictiveness and animosity, and to supplant it by examples of clemency and goodwill which would be a noble contribution towards the combining of the Arab peoples in a united effort for the common weal.

In 1913, after Turkey's recent defeats in the Balkan War, the Turkish province of El Hasa was thrown into disorder. Ibn Sa'ud seized the opportunity for reconquering that province and that of El Katif. He allowed the captured garrisons to return to Turkey by sea and to take with them their guns and ammunition, and that despite the brutality



KING IBN SA'UD, THIRD FROM THE LEFT. NOTE THE SIMPLICITY OF HIS ATTIRE.



KING IBN SA'UD'S IKHWAN CAVALRY.

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and revenge universally practised by the Turks in similar circumstances.

In 1921 he captured Hail, the capital of the Al Rashid family, and put a final end to their rule.

The members of that family were taken to Riyadh, where they remain to this day, treated with every consideration, rather as if they were his own children than recent enemies who had constantly displayed a vindictive and cruel spirit toward himself and his house.

In 1925 he completed the conquest of the Hedjaz, the campaign culminating in the flight of King Hussein.

The people of the Hedjaz looked for a swift revenge from their conqueror, but instead, kindness and justice were meted out to them, while peace, security, and orderliness supplanted maladministration, favouritism and uncertainty.

During the first ten years of this critical fighting, Ibn Sa'ud incessantly led the life of a soldier on active service, living perpetually in a tent, moving from place to place, hunting or being hunted, snatching whatever sleep he could sitting up, with his head resting against the handle of his sword, ready at the slightest threat to stand up and strike.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that this military genius of desert warfare, and warrior of countless fights is an accomplished horseman, marksman and swordsman.

His harsh experiences have not made him, as well they might, domineering and austere. On the contrary, his manner is simple and unassuming, and his actions, when not engaged in conflict, considered and restrained.

Far from being carried away by his successes—which he assesses at their true value—he regards each

merely as a step towards his final goal, and their fruits as gifts from God to be used with wisdom and moderation. It is his realization of this truth which invests his whole bearing with a serene, unassuming dignity, and with a quality which at once invites trust and confidence.

In war he is parsimonious, husbanding his resources with the greatest care. In peace he is lavish in his generosity, paying small heed to the amount he bestows, and he is wont to say that money is a means not an end, and should be used for the benefit of humanity.

He has been frequently heard to say :

"What we sow, we shall reap. If we sow good in the days of affluence, we shall reap the fruit of that good in the days of war and adversity."

By this simple philosophy we recognize the fact that charity and goodness have no frontiers, and that Ibn Sa'ud's practical application of it is a noble example, not only to the people who recognize him as their king, but to the nations of the world.

It is then, in the nature of things that Abd-al-'Aziz, Ibn-Abd.-al Rahman, al Faisal, al Sa'ud, should tower in stature over his followers, for he overlooks their lesser minds and gazes with unfaltering vision beyond their limited horizon.

If King Hussein and his sons inspired little confidence in their ability to control the destinies of the Arabian people, Ibn Sa'ud with his stern features and level eyes carries conviction that here indeed is one who is not only a ruler of men but a statesman in every sense of the word. For Arabia and for England it is indeed a tragedy that circumstances, over which neither England nor Sa'ud had control, deprived the Arab people of their real leader at a time when

inspired leadership was so sadly needed, and that England was deprived of a staunch and active ally who had already proved his friendship during the early and troubled years of his kingship. It has already been shown how he was recognized by the general consent of the majority of the people of Arabia as the natural leader of the Arab movement, and how the shortsightedness of the Indian military authorities on the one hand, and their lack of means on the other, deprived Ibn Sa'ud from taking his rightful place, during the World War, in Arabian affairs.

King Hussein, on the other hand, being well aware of the determination of the Arab people to make their bid for freedom, seized the opportunity, when war isolated the Turkish garrison of Mecca, to launch his revolt after he was assured of British support. Circumstances favoured him; his proximity to Egypt kept him in close bonds with the British Government and the natural desire of our military and civil authorities to profit by any circumstances which might prove an embarrassment to the Turk, encouraged them to sponsor his enterprise and accept him as the leader of a movement which might prove of great service in our eastern war area.

The divided control of Arabian affairs between the India Office and the Foreign Office, whereby matters affecting the Hedjaz were dealt with by the latter, and those of Nedjd, the province of Ibn Sa'ud, by the former, militated against concerted action and still more against a just appreciation of the true motives underlying Arab aspirations, and the recognition of their determination to be free. Throughout the War the British Government failed to realize that either from an Imperial, or, from a purely Arab

viewpoint, Arabia was, in spite of its apparent tribal divisions, a political, military and religious entity, and so focused its attention too closely on the Hedjaz, so that the problem of Arabia was dealt with in a sentimental rather than in a statesmanlike manner. The movement thus was utilized, in a limited sense, as a mere military expediency instead of being forged into an instrument for universal good. In its wider sense it might, nay, should, have been employed as a means of demonstrating to the world a new conception of Imperial duty.

Under existing circumstances it was not difficult for the Sherif Hussein to usurp the position for which Ibn Sa'ud had the prior claim, both by virtue of his past achievements, his outstanding ability, and the confidence which he inspired in his friends. All these qualifications were palpably lacking in the King of the Hedjaz, whose only solid claim for distinction was his descent from the prophet. On him, however, the British lavished their friendship, their money and their arms, instead of impartially distributing their bounty and using their powerful influence to call forth a united effort. Thus, the Hedjaz came to be regarded as Arabia and the King as its only true representative.

Ibn Sa'ud watched events from his inaccessible fastness at Riyadh. From this isolated spot, uninfluenced by the unrealities and excitements of war, he wavered not one inch from his determination to build his new Arabia, when the time came, on the lines he had so carefully drawn many years previously.

Both King Hussein and Feisal, King of Iraq, treated him with studied insolence. Bolstered up by the greatest power in the world, they considered themselves as the salt of the earth and treated him

as the dung in the fields. The inevitable result was that Ibn Sa'ud, seeing his rival, who, in the interests of Arabia, should have been his friend, outwardly growing in strength, saw equally well where the true weakness of his position lay. He saw that so long as the Arab movement was dependent entirely on foreign assistance it would never lead to the true emancipation of the Arab people. He therefore prepared himself for that day, which he knew would inevitably arrive, when the King of the Hedjaz would have to stand or fall by his own unaided strength. That day would test his right to the allegiance of those he claimed to rule. He realized that owing to the sway which the Turk had held for so many centuries over the peninsula, that the Arab peoples—who were once a united force which shook Europe to its foundations—had become a disintegrated mass, each chieftain plotting and scheming for his own ends without thought of the welfare of the nation as a whole. He realized, too, that, until the majority of the people of Arabia were united for a common purpose, true progress would not be possible, nor the country reach that state of ordered government and civilization it was capable of attaining. Above all, he realized that unless its people were directed by loyal and disinterested leadership such unity was impossible.

Of all things Ibn Sa'ud is a realist as well as a patriot; a great student of history he is equally alive to the weaknesses of his race as to its strength, and since the days when he reconquered his father's throne he had envisaged the unification of Arabia into a political entity capable of playing once more an important rôle in world affairs and of giving happiness to its people. He regarded the usurpation of King

Hussein, then, not only as a slight to himself, but as a bar to the future emancipation of his country. King Hussein was at present supported by England, but England would not always be in a position to lavish upon him her liberal support. Hussein was supported, too, by a mercenary army equipped with modern arms, but that army must needs be paid and the mismanagements of the King would some day make payment difficult. Ibn Sa'ud had to consider the means for strengthening his own position both as a counter to Hussein, and for the advancement of his projects. He therefore created the Ikhwan movement so as to give to his scattered people a moral and physical force sufficient for carrying out the difficult task he had set himself. By creating the Ikhwan movement he cultivated that religious fanaticism which made its devotees impervious to hardship or danger and zealous in the promotion of lofty projects. He merged the jealousies of his petty chiefs into a great brotherhood, which the word Ikhwan implies, so that they felt themselves to be in the vanguard of a new crusade. To do this entailed colossal and unending labour on his part and he himself, in a vast tent brilliantly lighted with gasoline lamps, preached his religion, day in and day out ; preached the necessity to cleanse the true religion from the abuses which had made it of ill repute, till, by his inspiration and sincerity he roused their torpid lethargy to volcanic energy. Already this force, which he had recreated, impelled alike by religious fervour and political zeal, has overwhelmed the Kingdom of Ibn Rashid, the principality of Jauf and the Kingdom of the Hedjaz and enabled Ibn Sa'ud to unite them under a single control. Not only did he in this manner become their religious



THE WALLED TOWNSHIP OF HOFUF,
THE CHIEF TOWN OF IBN SA'UD'S
PROVINCE OF HASA.

10. 11. 1918

11. 11. 1918

12. 11. 1918

13. 11. 1918

14. 11. 1918

preceptor, but he led them in battle, and so added to his spiritual leadership of his people his outstanding military gifts.

But Ibn Sa'ud is not carried away by the successes he has attained. Inevitable as fate, he is building up his strength; mustering such resources as his country affords, with care and wisdom, doing it methodically and how and when his means allow. In doing so, he does not allow any encroachment of his rights or the rights of his people.

So he stands to-day as a true representative of the Arab people, and as such the future must reckon him. For if there is one Arab in the world capable of unifying Arabia and making its people once more a nation it is Ibn Sa'ud, and the day will surely dawn when, if he lives, he will be recognized as one of the great builders of our day.

Being a true man and a natural leader he possesses an unfailing gift of picking out the right men to aid him. Men who are loyal to a degree and serve him not for what he is able to bestow on them, but for what he represents to them in Arabia. Men so loyal that their own lives count as nothing, of women who regard the lives of their husbands and sons as dedicated to the National Cause—who on bidding them good-bye on their departure for war say with fearless simplicity, "May God unite us in Paradise." On one occasion in 1919 I thought it might interest his son Feisal to go up in a Handley Page aeroplane which had been placed at our disposal in Paris. I asked permission from the man Ibn Sa'ud had sent to guard his son. He refused, thinking of the risk from which he would be helpless to protect him. I pressed the matter—foolishly—whereupon he flashed his sword from its scabbard. "I will slay myself

this instant if you insist," he said, almost weeping in the intensity of his feeling, but his manner was so determined that I was left in no doubt but that he would have done it then and there, and, moved by his wonderful devotion, I clasped him in my arms and pacified him.

Ibn Jeloui, Ibn Sa'ud's governor of the province of Hassa, affords another striking example of his choice of a worthy lieutenant.

In Turkish times this province was held by them on sufferance. It was not only unruly, it was turbulent. No man could pass in safety, no caravan cross it unless strongly escorted.

When I was in Bahrein in 1919 Ibn Sa'ud's subsidy of Rs. 150,000 was loaded onto a single camel and conveyed by this solitary vehicle in perfect safety to its destination in Riyadh. On its way its rider passed a tent before which one of the former and most notorious of robbers was sitting. The rider struck the bags with his camel stick so that the coins clinked. "Old rascal," he jeered, "would you not like to have what I have in these bags?"

They relate that on one occasion a man reported to Ibn Jeloui that a bag of coffee lay far out on the Riyadh road.

"How do you know it was coffee?" he asked his informant.

"Because I kicked it," he replied.

"Cut off his big toe," commanded Ibn Jeloui. Which having been done, he said, "In future do not dare to touch anything you see upon the road with your foot or anything else."

The loss of a big toe is a small price to pay for the peace of a province and the safety of its people.

So to-day men and goods may pass throughout the province of Hasa in perfect security.

In the days of the Turks and of King Hussein, robbery and violence were rife upon the Jeddah-Mecca road, the pilgrim caravans were frequently rifled and the pilgrims robbed. To prevent this the Turks built forts all along the road, and the tribes along the route were paid heavy subsidies to abstain from pillage.

Now Prince Feisal, son of Ibn Sa'ud, is governor of Mecca. I recently went, by permission of Ibn Sa'ud, fifteen kilometres along this road while the pilgrims were passing along it. Dusk was falling, the line of camels taking the pilgrims stretched to the horizon. On the hills the ruins of the Turkish forts were silhouetted against the darkening sky, decaying monuments to the turbulent days that were gone. That great concourse of worshippers, some on camels, others solitary and on foot, passed out of my vision in peace and security into the gathering night.

During the years which followed the War, when the Sherifian family still felt itself secure, King Hussein and Feisal showed their lack of foresight by insulting Sa'ud, or his representatives, on every occasion possible. The open hostility of the two parties was demonstrated by the fluctuating fight which was continually waged between them ostensibly for the possession of a small desert town and to which both sides laid claim. In truth it was hardly worth fighting for.

After the War the rivalry between Ibn Sa'ud and King Hussein broke out into open hostilities. The British Government, still blind to the realities of the Arabian situation, kept pressing Ibn Sa'ud to maintain the peace, and urging him to remember that

Hussein was the friend and ally of England. It did not appear to matter that Sa'ud was himself a friend, more loyal or of longer standing than the Hashmanite sovereign, or that the latter had all along been the provocator. By this action they took sides and by supporting Hussein made him the guardian of British prestige, with the consequence that, when he was driven out, British prestige fled with him, with results which would have been still more evil but for the friendship of Ibn Sa'ud and his level-headedness, which enabled him to see that the British Government had been led astray by the man he drove into exile.

Ibn Sa'ud's attitude and letters to the British were a model of correctness, but he firmly maintained his rights, and he was not to be intimidated into surrendering them. In order to give the British Government an opportunity of clearly understanding his point of view, in 1919 he sent his son Feisal, accompanied by Ahmad Ibn Thunyyan, a brave man and an astute diplomat trained in the Constantinople school of diplomacy, to visit England.

Their reception at the Foreign Office was most unfortunate. The late Lord Curzon treated them like children and so patronizingly that they left England enraged, and swore they would never visit the country again.

I was sent out to Paris to take charge of them during the temporary absence of Mr. Philby. I found them in a dangerous mood.

"If Captain Y——of the Foreign Office comes to Nejd," said Ahmad, "we will cut his throat," and he glared.

"No, no," I said. "That would not accord with your well-known hospitality."



PRINCE FEISAL, SON OF KING IBN SA'UD, AT THE AGE OF 17.

He laughed heartily. "Well, perhaps not," he said, "still, he had better not come."

We had long talks together with Prince Feisal on Arabia's future. I implored moderation. Finally Ahmad promised. He said:

"I give you my word on behalf of my master Ibn Sa'ud that no matter what the provocation, there shall be no war for three years."

And I bear testimony to the word of true and honourable men that that promise was scrupulously kept. Ibn Sa'ud honoured the word of his representative given without consulting him. It was sufficient that it was given in his name, for his name is that of trustee for the honour of his people.

Feisal, son of Hussein, the late King of Iraq, was staying in Paris at the time I took charge of the mission, and I thought it a good opportunity to try and effect a reconciliation. I suggested to Ahmad Ibn Thunyyan that his mission should make an official call on Feisal Ibn Hussein. At first he was adamant that nothing on earth would persuade him to go.

"He has constantly insulted my master, and I will have nothing to do with him," he said with emotion.

"For the good of Arabia and its people," I pleaded. Finally, on these grounds he gave way, but he utterly refused to take Prince Feisal, son of Ibn Sa'ud, with him. With this I had to be content.

I arranged for the interview through Ja'afer Pasha al Askari, Feisal Ibn Hussein's A.D.C. and we duly called upon Feisal, the future King of Iraq.

Ahmad sat with Feisal on a large settee and I sat with Ja'afer Pasha, one eye cocked upon the two on the sofa and one ear listening to Feisal, and one to Ja'afer.

Presently Feisal said, " Who are these Ikhwan ? "

The question itself was an insult and meant to be so, for all the world knew that the Ikhwan were Ibn Sa'ud's soldiers ; it further implied that they were of so little worth as to be unknown to the outside world.

" I am told that they are not allowed to cut their beards," he added. Thereby jeering at the religious aspect of the movement.

Ahmad's eyes shot lightning and his hand fell on his sword hilt. Ja'afer and I rose simultaneously and closed the interview.

In the car Ahmad was stuttering with rage. He upbraided me :

" Why did you persuade me to go ? " he hissed, " did I not tell you that he is nothing but——"

I calmed him by saying :

" The cause is too great for such petty rudeness to affect it. You have done the right thing and your action and its result can only make the cause of your master more just."

As King Hussein had spat upon the name of Indians and so proved his unfitness for the great and noble task entrusted to him, so Feisal, his son, proved himself that day unfitted to lead the destinies of a great people.

Both are dead—Feisal served the people of Mesopotamia faithfully and well. He died in their service, a sacrifice to their welfare ; but, the sadness of it, he failed in the greater service he was entrusted with. He will live in our affection, but his name will not be remembered in the years to come by the Arab peoples as one of the great men of their race.



AHMAD BIN ABDALLAH AL TUNNYÂN, PRINCE FEISAL'S COMPANION
ON HIS MISSION TO ENGLAND IN 1919.

CHAPTER XVII

THEY HAVE NOT LABOURED IN VAIN

IT is vitally necessary that the British people should have a clear understanding of events which have taken place in Arabia in recent years and, above all, of the spirit which is impelling the Arab peoples. The fundamental factor to realize is that the ideal of freedom is deep-seated and permanent and, although there may be rivalry between the different clans and their chiefs, they are linked together by three great factors, their language, their religion, and their desire for freedom. Whatever the future holds for the chieftains occupying important positions in the Jezirat-al-Arab, one thing is certain, that the ideal of freedom must continue to grow and increase until it is satisfied. Like the mighty waters of the Tigris, it cannot be stemmed, for if it is pent up, it will sweep away the barrier and carry everything before it. This yearning for liberty has been growing steadily, but surely, for many years, and even making allowances for Pan-Islamic, Bolshevik and other intrigues which have tried to utilize Arab sentiment for their own ends, the strength of the feeling is such that nothing can eradicate it, since it is implanted deep in the souls of the people. They do not, perhaps, themselves, quite understand its full significance or realize the force which *is* impelling them and which, in spite of themselves, *must* lead them forward to their destiny.

It is unfortunate that those Arabs who took upon themselves the direction of Arab affairs during the War period did not realize this fact. King Hussein championed the Arab cause, but in his championing allowed his own prestige and ambitions to warp his judgment. In the end he became a megalomaniac, talking to imaginary audiences of what he had done and mouthing of his own greatness. We must make full allowance for the strain to which he was subjected and for the difficulties which beset him, but these difficulties would have been greatly minimized had he looked upon himself as the servant and not the master of the Arab people. He built his house of sand, and now it is gone.

His sons could never divest themselves of the personal and human element, with the result that they allowed their feelings to tint the colour of their vision. Later on, Feisal learnt something of the truth when he had to interpret the wishes of the people who had chosen him their king, but then he was the servant of a state, not the leader of a nation—for Iraq is but a section of the "Island of the Arabs."

It must be admitted that the Arabs had just cause to be suspicious as to the intentions of the Allies with regard to their country, and it is, indeed, a tragedy that the Sykes-Picot Treaty, which divided their country and that of the Turks into three spheres of Russian, French, and British interests, was ever signed. In justice it is only right to say that it was signed in ignorance and out of necessity during a crisis. It was signed in ignorance because the British Government was, at that time, completely out of touch with the true situation in Arabia. That country was regarded in general as a

wild and desolate place, containing, for the most part, an ignorant and half civilized people. According to old conceptions it was considered that the people could only benefit by the elimination of the Turk and the substitution of British and French administrations. It was not realized that the Arab people desired with burning passion their emancipation from a foreign yoke, and it was only after the Sherifs' revolt that something of the force of Arab feeling in the matter was realized. It was then, unfortunately, too late to undo the harm which had been done, and that unhappy treaty remained a perpetual obstacle to a frank and just understanding being reached between the Arab and British peoples. Towards the end of the War it was fully realized that from a British point of view, at any rate, it was moribund and the last words which Sir Mark Sykes, one of the signatories, spoke to me before I left for Mesopotamia were :

"Impress on everybody that there can be no LAND GRABBING."

And when I asked him, "What about the Sykes-Picot Treaty?"

He replied, "Oh, that is dead."

But, unfortunately, it was not dead, and its effects can still be felt to-day. Admittedly, from Britain's point of view, it was a mistake and Britain has undoubtedly done her best to undo its evil effects. But it would have been better had Britain surrendered her partnership in that instrument voluntarily and openly, so that she did not appear to do so as the result of Arab agitation. At any rate, there it was, and we have to consider what, under the circumstances, was the right line of action to take. It is here that we cannot agree with Lawrence's

action in Syria. It was well known that the Sykes-Picot Treaty allotted Syria to the French. Lawrence should, nay, must have seen that the French would never surrender their rights and, that being so, his clear duty was to consider Syria as temporarily lost and concentrate Arabian endeavour on the great work of reconstruction needed in the rest of Arabia and to have used his influence with the British Government to make the greater work a possibility. Taking the Arab army into Damascus was like leading it into an ambush, and when Feisal's officers, on being driven out of Syria by the French, found themselves deprived of positions they had been contemplating they would fill, and the holding of which would make them people of importance in the Arab kingdom, they flocked to Mesopotamia and used the very money and arms England had provided for their fight against the Turks, against their benefactors.

It may be argued that had they not done so, Mesopotamia or Iraq would not be a free country to-day ; that is not so, for they did not procure the Independence of Iraq through the instrument of this revolt, but, rather, because the British people desired them to be free.

But the fact that they forgot gratitude and turned upon those who had sacrificed so much in their interests gives a clear indication of the strength of the sentiment with which they were possessed and which, in this manner, led to unnecessary bitterness and suspicion.

This animosity was increased it is true by Bolshevik propaganda and the tactics of France who, to distract attention from her action in Syria, used every means to bring discredit upon England.

Allowances must be made for the fact that, with the example of Syria before them, there was a genuine fear in the hearts of the Arab peoples that England likewise might seek to curtail their aspirations and, by territorial acquisitions or commercial chains, hold them in subservience.

Those in the present Arab Government of Mesopotamia still do not realize that they owe both their present status and the liberty and safety of their country to England—who, having driven out the Turk, made secure their frontiers and, through her friendship with Ibn Sa'ud, prevented bloodshed and protected the young kingdom while it was still in its infancy.

Neither do they realize that they, too, are the servants not the masters of the Arab nation and that on their far-seeing statesmanship their future depends.

Arabia is still in the throes of a great national revival ; it is part of the East, and what has taken place in Arabia is merely the reflection of what has occurred in every Eastern country without exception.

Out of the ashes of the past a new world has been born. That whisper which in 1911 reached the ears of Dhildi in the barren peaks of the Himalayas has become the shouting of a vast multitude—a shout of triumph.

Does it spell the doom of Britain, does it herald her decay ? No—rather it gives the British people a new, a greater and a more glorious mission to fulfil.

To stand courageously forth as the champion of the new era, not the defender of the old.

To give to the world an example of fearless trust—to give to those groping towards the light her

helping hand. To give to them freely of her great store of experience so that she may in very truth be regarded as the benefactor of mankind.

As to the events of which this book speaks Britain has no cause to be ashamed of what she has accomplished, nor those of her sons who laboured, to regret their toil and sacrifice.

Those who have died have not died in vain and those who live may rest content. If any made mistakes—who can be wise save He Who entrusted them with the work they so well performed ?

THE END

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